

Evangelion: Last Best Hope

By StormofDragons

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Preface

About the Book

Summary

My Season 3 of Neon Genesis Evangelion

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Welcome to Season Three of Neon Genesis Evangelion: Last Best Hope. The events chronicled here take place after the 1st season of the TV series, and the End of Evangelion Movie, as well as the events that took place in "The Awakening." The 24 part second season.

Episode 3:01 Upgrade

Presumed date is June 9th, 2019

Misato sat at the head of the briefing table, her laser pointer working the projection screen.

"So, we know we need to salvage a Magi System in order to access the Global Military Satellite network," she was saying. "The two most logical choices are Beijing, or Matsushiro, as they are the closest. Matsushiro is the target of preference because it's closer, and recovery time is likely to be shorter."

"However when Lilith's body was decomposing after Third Impact, part of her arm fell on that region, and there was extensive damage to the base. We weren't able to salvage anything from there before, but we didn't ever consider sending an EVA or a Cherub to assist in the recovery," Ritsuko said.

"So, we send a force of Cherubs to help the recovery teams breach the facility, and then recover the Magi units there. We bring them back here and install them in the control center, with as much of the hardware as we can salvage from the Matsushiro base installed intact. What's the soonest you think you can have them up and running, once you get them back here?" Misato asked.

"Depending upon how co-operative the personalities within the three units are, we should be able to get them up and running within a week. Provided that their hard drives are still good. If they've crashed, we'll have to see if we can find replacements, and that won't be easy."

"Okay, so, we'll have Aida and Suzuhara go with the crews to handle recovery of the Magi. In the meantime we'll load up the last four EVA transports with Cherubs and send them to Germany. Asuka says that Germany has plenty of Aviation fuel, and even some aerial refueling tankers. We'll send a couple of our own up, and hope that they figure out what we're doing when they take off. When the transports return, we'll send four more units, giving Germany a total of eight. That will leave us with the two EVA's, and eight Cherubs of our own," Misato said.

"Seven," Ritsuko corrected, "Keller was killed."

"Jeez, how could I forget that," Misato said, resting her head against her hands.

"So, Ritsuko, the question becomes, do we need more Cherubs to secure the cities we know are inhabited?" Misato asked.

"I don't know. We have twelve empty growth chambers below now; I hadn't thought we would ever need more than 16 Units. We could always start the next group of twelve, and then, if we don't want them, flush the tanks before they reach the third trimester."

"Okay. That sounds like a plan, better to be safe than sorry, I suppose. So have you decided if you're going to take Commander Bergs invitation to come to Germany and see their weapons?" Misato asked, recalling the message that Asuka had conveyed from the new Berlin NERV Commanding Officer.

"Oh, I'll go, but I want to get the Magi up and running first. Then I'll go."

"Okay, I need to call Aida and Suzuhara to let them know we've got a mission for them. Do you have your recovery team picked out?" Misato asked, picking up her phone.

"Yes, they're on standby now, just waiting the word," Ritsuko said.

Misato nodded and dialed Kensuke's house.

"Aida here," he answered.

"Aida, Misato. I want you and Suzuhara to accompany the recovery teams to Matsushiro to help them dig out and retrieve the Magi system. Get him, and get in here quick. The teams are leaving in an hour."

"Yes, Ma'am. I'll go get Toji now. He and Hikari are over at Shinji and Asuka's."

"So they finally decided to surface did they?" Misato laughed.

"No, but Toji and Hikari didn't give them a choice. Hikari took them breakfast in bed this morning, and needed Toji for an escort. She decided last night that they had had two full days all to themselves, and it was time they came out of seclusion. Besides, she was gonna go nuts if she couldn't talk to Asuka after all these years."

"I can understand that. Anyhow, get Suzuhara and come on in, we'll need you guys to clear some debris," Misato said.

"Roger Commander," Suzuhara said, hanging up.

###

"No-chan?" Kensuke called.

"Yes Ken-chan?" Nozomi answered.

"You want to go over and bug Shinji and Asuka with Toji and your sister?"

"Sure, sounds like fun, lets go," she said, looping her arm through his, and dragging him out the door.

Moments later they were jogging across the deck, and up to Shinji's back door. They knocked briefly before opening it and walking in. Toji and Hikari were sitting at the kitchen table, talking to Shinji and Asuka. The new couple was still dressed in their pajamas. Or more precisely Shinji's pajamas. Shinji was wearing the pants and a white undershirt. Asuka was wearing the pajama top.

"Kensuke, come on in," Shinji said, waving Kensuke and Nozomi in, and motioning them to have a seat.

Kensuke sat down, Nozomi following close behind, and turned to look at Shinji and Asuka. They weren't sitting in the normal chairs that surrounded the table. Instead Shinji had pulled the small bamboo couch, covered by a thick cushion, over to the table, and he and Asuka were curled up together on it.

Kensuke smiled at them.

They were holding hands, and even when they reached for their tea, they kept one set of hands clasped together.

"Now Asuka, what is the story with your hair?" Hikari asked.

Asuka smiled, and ran a hand through the lions mane of hair that was puffed up around her, glowing in the morning light.

"Baka Shinji. He messed it up. It's okay though, I told him if he's going to mess it up he's got to brush it out," she smiled up at him.

Kensuke swore and Toji laughed.

"Dude, that's a week you owe me," Toji said, pointing at Kensuke. For his part Kensuke could only nod.

"What?" Hikari asked.

"I bet Kensuke that Asuka would be calling Ikari Baka Shinji' within a week. He's got to clean my uniforms and boots for a week now."

"Speaking of Uniforms, Misato needs us to get to the base. We're gonna take the Cherubs and help out the recovery teams that are getting the Magi system," Aida said.

"Okay, but did they decide which one we're going after?" Toji asked.

"Matsushiro. But the entrance to the base is damaged, and they want us to dig it out for the recovery teams," Kensuke said.

"When do they need us?"

"Misato said ASAP. We're leaving within the hour."

"Well, we'd better get going, then, bye guys, bye honey," Toji said, bending over to kiss his wife goodbye.

Kensuke got up, and followed Toji out the door, and within a few minutes, Toji's 4Runner could be heard pulling out of the driveway.

"So what are your plans for the day?" Hikari asked the couple.

"Well, we had planned on just lying around the house, but Shinji mentioned something about a dip in the Jacuzzi, I think."

Shinji blushed, "Well, Kensuke fixed it up, before he moved out. I haven't been in it for some time, and thought it might be a good time to get back into it. I should probably call Misato though and see if she needs me for anything."

He was reaching for his cell phone, when Asuka reached over and slapped his other hand.

"No you don't, Misato knows your number, if she wants to talk to you, she'll call."

"She's right Shinji, Misato said you should take the next few days off, and she'll call you only if she really needs you. You have other responsibilities this week," Hikari said.

"Yeah, like making sure my every need is met," Asuka teased.

Shinji surrendered.

###

"Okay Aida, can you see any sign of the main shaft?" Doctor Akagi asked.

"Sort of. I think that this blur here is the most likely place," Kensuke said

"Suzuhara, can you see anything from where you are?"

"No Ma'am, I've got nothing," he said. He didn't like being here, it brought up some really bad memories. This had been where the activation test for Unit-03 had taken place. Where the Angel had seized control of his EVA and tried to kill him. Then, after he'd been trapped while eject from the Angel, he'd been crushed in the berserk hand of Unit-01 under the control of the Dummy Plug.

He didn't remember much of it, because he hadn't really been paying that much attention at the time, at least not until things went wrong. Then he was riveted to every minute detail. He glanced around. Over there was the small valley he'd entered as Unit-03 had begun walking, inexorably towards Tokyo-3.

"Doctor, Akagi, I know its' been several years, but I think I remember that valley there. If I do, then that means the entrance Unit-03 came up through is over in that depression somewhere," he said, his huge Cherubim hand pointing to a low spot in the forest.

"Okay, you two go investigate over there. After your EVA was taken over and escaped, we capped the main shaft with a thick concrete plug," Ritsuko said.

Toji and Kensuke moved over to the indicated area and began pulling up the trees that had sprouted like weeds. This area had been lightly forested before Third Impact, with several buildings on the surface, and the city in the distance, but the fall of Lilith's arm upon this area had devastated everything, making it unrecognizable.

The arm has flattened the structures, either by direct impact, or shockwave, and as it decayed into the soil, the plants had seemed to be trying to cram 20 years of growth into a single year. So now, here they were, three and a half years after Third Impact, standing in the middle of a tropical rain forest, with trees almost as tall as the Cherubim.

Kensuke's foot scuffed the detritus of the forest floor, and revealed a dull gray surface.

"I have something here," he said, bending over and starting to uproot trees and bushes.

Soon one edge of a large circle was revealed.

"This is it," he told Toji. "Doctor Akagi, we've found it."

She and a group of technicians drove their HumVee's over to the area that Kensuke and Toji were clearing, and could now make out the large circular plug of concrete. It was about as wide as a Cherubim was tall, and must have easily been twenty meters thick.

"Okay, can you two pull that thing out, or should we try to blast it. I know the engineers brought a fair amount of C-4 just in case."

"Let us give it a try," Toji said, squatting down, and waiting as Kensuke did the same.

"Ready?"

Kensuke nodded, and they thrust their fingers into the seam between the plug and the walls of the hole. They dug down, until they each had a firm grip.

"Okay, we lift on three, and toss it north. Ready? One. Two. Three." Toji said, and they tossed the heavy plug to the side, away from Ritsuko and the other personnel.

Toji peered within.

"Nothing on thermal or infrared. Lowlight is almost useless as well, no emergency lighting detected."

"Without external power to recharge them, or take over. Emergency lighting would have lasted no more than two weeks," Ritsuko said.

"Have either of you memorized the maps of this place?"

"I did," Kensuke said.

"Do you think you can go down here and clear us a path to Central Dogma?"

"Yes Ma'am. Toji, give me a hand getting into this hole," he said, standing up, and gripping Toji's hand, as he descended into the darkness. Toji helped, a little uneasy about entering this structure again. Soon Kensuke's Cherub was out of sight, as it dropped into the depths.

"Aida here Doctor Akagi, I've reached the first barrier at the bottom of shaft A-17. Proceeding to open the doors."

From deep within the facility, there was a loud creaking and ripping.

"It's dark in here. Deep dark. I'm gonna need that emergency source."

"Here it comes, heads up," Toji said, dropping a large utility trailer with a giant spotlight on one end into the pit. Designed of visual air-search at night, or the same thing that civilians used to light up the night at the openings of big movies, it made a handy, EVA or Cherubim sized flashlight.

"Thanks," Aida said, catching the unit, and turning it into the darkness beyond. He could see the access way stretched out before him.

"I'm heading deeper into the structure."

There was the sound of shuffling, as he penetrated further, and several more scrapes and wrenches, as he tore open doors and squeezed through narrow passageways. Finally they heard him say, "Final shutter breached, now entering Central Dogma. Wow. Doctor Akagi, is this what Central Dogma looked like in Tokyo-3?"

"Very nearly, Aida. The Matsushiro facility was constructed using many of the same blueprints that NERV used for the Geo-Front facility," she offered.

"Wow, then I really missed out. This is incredible."

"Are the Magi intact?"

"Yeah, they look to be. The room is intact for the most part, there is some slight deformation to the ceiling, and I noticed on the way in here that all levels above this one have been crushed to form a protective bubble over the facility."

"Any signs of scavengers or anything else down there?" Doctor Akagi asked.

"Not really," Kensuke said, turning to examine the walls of the building with his light. "There's some odd damage on the walls, looks like energy blasts, probably from when Unit-03 was taken over."

"Negative, Aida. This facility was returned to pristine condition following the destruction of Unit-03."

"Well something made these marks," he said, running a hand over the hard surface, and feeling the deep scratches in the wall.

"Aida, I don't like this, I want you to withdraw slowly, and return to the surface. We'll perform a full subsurface scan before anyone else enters the facility."

"Okay Doctor Akagi, I & Hang on. I thought I saw something move."

"Kensuke, get out of there now," Toji was saying.

"I'm coming, I'm coming, hold your horses, this is a pretty tight fit through here you know. There, finally, I'm back in the main shaft, see?" he said.

Toji looked into the shaft, and could see Aida below, waving the light.

"I'm starting up now," he said.

"Phew. Kensuke old man, for a minute there you had me worried," Toji said, watching him climb the walls.

"No problems, it was probably just a trick of," he never finished.

"KENSUKE BEHINDYOU!" Toji shouted, as the light vanished, and a blur washed over Kensuke, blocking him from view.

###

Shinji and Asuka had just dried off after spending a leisurely afternoon alone within the shielded of his Jacuzzi when Shinji's Emergency Pager went off. They'd made love several times, and were both becoming more comfortable and daring each time, exploring and experiencing one another, as they adjusted to this new life. But something was intruding on their time alone, and Shinji felt a rising sense of dread, as he looked at the buzzing and vibrating device.

"Trouble," he said simply.

He ran to his cell phone, and picked it up, dialing Misato instantly.

"Shinji, Aida and Suzuhara have been attacked in Matsushiro. We don't know what it is. We lost contact with them almost as soon as Ritsuko called in the alert. Some kind of communications jamming. Just before we lost sensor contact we confirmed a Blue Pattern."

"Legionnaire," Shinji said, turning to look at Asuka. She gulped and looked grimly back at him, nodding in response to his unasked question.

"Sound the Alert, and clear the streets. We're coming," he said, hanging up the phone.

Shinji sprinted for the bedroom while Asuka grabbed at a suitcase that was sitting in the living room. Misato had brought several changes of cloths by and thoughtfully left them on the front door step, rather than disturbing them. She'd discovered them there the morning after she and Shinji had been re-united.

Shinji ran to his closet, stripping off his shorts, and pulled out a tight fitting pair of purple leather pants. He slipped into them as he ran down stairs, and opened the door to the closet, pulling out his matching jacket, boots, and motorcycle helmet.

Asuka goggled at the EVA in miniature that stood before her.

He reached into the closet and tossed her a leather jacket from within, and pulled out another helmet for her.

"We're taking the tubes?" she asked.

"Nope. I have something special that's been waiting for just such an emergency. Come on."

They ran out the door, and Shinji keyed the Garage door opener as he ran. The door slid open revealing a car covered by a large brown drop cloth.

"My BMW!" Asuka squealed.

"I saved it for you. I don't drive it, but I keep it running, and all the fluids are good. But that's not what we're here for," he said, stepping to the other side of the garage, and pointing to another shroud covered object, "This is." He yanked back the cover.

"Wow!" Asuka exclaimed, seeing the crimson and purple paint flashing in the dim light of the garage.

"When did you get this?"

"Kensuke gave it to me last week. Kind of an early birthday present. The old one was totaled, and we've spent the last three years looking for another one. They're pretty rare," he said, climbing on, and keying the ignition.

"How does she run?" Asuka asked, climbing on behind him.

"No idea. She's a Virgin. This is my first time with her," he said.

"Oh really?" she said slyly, "two in a week, Mister Ikari? You sly dog you."

Shinji flushed under his helmet. "I couldn't rider her. I needed something else."

"Oh? What was that?" Asuka asked, thinking the bike needed work before it was ready to run.

"My Riding Partner," he said, as he gunned the throttle, and the bike roared out of the garage, and into the street. Reflexively Asuka leaned into him and held on for dear life. She didn't even watch the gauges or the scenery as it flashed by, paying more attention to the subtle play of her lovers' muscles under his leathers.

Yummy,' she thought as she felt his muscles bunch and flex beneath her.

"Phone. Dial Misato. Command." Shinji said, and this helmet comm. began to dial the base commander.

"Want me to open the tunnel Shinji?" she said, as she picked up.

"Um, yeah, how did you know?"

"Every camera on the base is tracking you. Aoba bet Hyuga you'd take the tunnels. Hyuga thought you'd take the Kiken' overland. They turned on every camera on the base to watch you come in."

Shinji laughed.

"Well open the tunnel and clear us all the way to the hangar, we're almost there," he said.

"Roger, tunnel open, you're good to go. Just don't break your neck on the ceiling when you drop in," she said.

"I'll slow down a little," he said and killed the comm.

"The tunnel?" Asuka asked.

"No. THE Tunnel. There's an emergency tunnel that leads from the park road ahead into the depths of the Base. The exit comes out in the Cherubim Hangar. There's twenty six ten meter thick hatches between us and them. At the speed we're traveling, if Misato doesn't open them ahead of us, we'll never stop in time. Although the AT fields would protect us, the bike would be a total loss."

"Heaven forbid," Asuka said.

Then the black maw of a tunnel was before them, yawning wide to accept. Shinji stomped the brakes, and chopped speed just enough to keep the bike on the ground as they crossed the threshold and began their steep decent into the base. Within moments they were streaking out of the tunnel, and into the Hangar. Shinji grabbed the brakes and slid the bike sideways, chopping speed. The bike came to a stop up against the far wall, and Shinji leapt off, as soon as Asuka had dismounted.

He took his helmet off, and looked up, his eyes widening in shock as he saw something he'd never believed he's see again.

A Red Evangelion stood next to his Purple one.

"Like it?" Asuka asked, throwing off her helmet.

"I love it. It looks like Unit-02."

"Same armor, different DNA," she said.

Shinji nodded, and started over to the front of his unit.

"Ready?"

"More than you'll ever know," she responded.

Twin AT fields reached for the EVA's and the two pilots vanished in a red glow.

"Unit-01 ready for launch," he sent to the Command Center.

"Unit-05 ready as well," came Asuka's voice.

He turned and looked at her, as she spoke.

"Hang on," he said, and the doors above them snapped open, and the two EVA's were launched towards the surface.

"Start to extend you're wings, when the catapult hits the surface it will throw us clear, and we can be airborne," Shinji said.

"Okay," she said, strain evident in her voice.

She's only done this once before, but practice makes perfect,' he thought, thinking back to the time ten months ago when he learned to generate his wings.

Then they were shooting up out of the base, wings extended before them. With a graceful sweep, they gained altitude, and rose ever higher.

"Got co-ordinates for us Misato?" Shinji asked.

"Transmitting. We're getting some garbled signals from the area, but comm's are still down. Satellite surveillance shows that both Cherubs are inside the base, but the technicians have pulled back to their vehicles some 2 kilometers from the entrance. We're losing our visual capability though, storms are building over the Sea of Japan, and heading inland."

"Roger, We should be there in fifteen minutes," Shinji said.

He glanced over at Asuka in her red EVA, and an odd smile lit the face of his Unit-01. She turned her head to the side, and saw him, her EVA returning the oddly disturbing smile. She reached out and took his hand, and together they flew into the gathering storm.

Next: on Episode 3:02 of Neon Genesis Evangelion

Shinji and Asuka arrive at the Matsushiro base, and are dismayed to discover that there is no sight of Toji or Kensuke. Have their friends already fallen at the hands of a Legionnaire, or will Shinji and Asuka be in time to save them.

It's Evangelion Episode 3:02 The Terror Beneath

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Episode 3:02 The Terror Beneath

Presumed date is June 9th, 2019

Ritsuko was standing next to the recovery vehicle that they'd driven up here from the Nagoya-2 facility, and watched with some apprehension, as the two Evangelion's dropped out of the sky.

"Doctor Akagi, is everyone here alright?" came Shinji's voice

"My personnel are all right," she said, "but Suzuhara jumped into the hole after Aida, and we haven't heard from either of them since."

"We still have comm. jamming Shinji," Asuka said, noting that she couldn't get through to the base.

"Alright Doctor, we'll handle this. Take your rigs and head back to the base. Have the Cherubim placed on alert, and standby. We'll bring Kensuke and Toji back."

Shinji walked over to the pit and looked inside. It was dark.

"Here," Asuka said, holding the barrel of her weapon into the hole. A light coming from it lit up the space below.

"What's that?" he asked.

"It's a TPG-402. Tactical Proton Cannon. I found it in Germany. Ritsuko's crews fixed it the day I arrived. It was pretty beat up."

"Proton Cannon? Like the Sniper Rifle I used?"

"Basically."

"What's the power source," Shinji asked.

"Me," she said, motioning to the plug in her back.

"Oh. Okay, lets go," he said, and jumped into the hole. He hit at the bottom, and noticed several hatches at various levels both above and below him. They would all be tight fits for an EVA to crawl through, but it would be possible.

Asuka landed next to him, and they looked about. There was the hatch Kensuke had forced open to get to the Magi. Above them was another hatch, which had also been broken open. This one looked like it had exploded outward, though, not been forced inward like the other one.

"No sign of the guys," Shinji said.

"No, but there's these odd scratches all along the walls," Asuka said, pointing to deep gouges in the wall.

"Hmm. Too deep and regular to be from the Cherubim's swords, they look like some kind of big claw marks," Shinji said.

"What do you think?" she asked.

"Only two choices. Top or bottom. The top ones been broken out while the bottom ones been busted in. I say bottom."

Asuka nodded and Shinji started crawling into the passageway before him. The light from Asuka's gun was flashing over his back, and he blocked most of it, but there was enough for him to see by. He eased through the passage, until he emerged into Central Dogma, the control center for the Matsushiro NERV facility.

"This is creepy," he said, as Asuka followed him into the room.

"Yeah. Brings back bad memories," Asuka agreed.

They stood there looking around. There were the three Magi computers, still intact, pristine in the darkness.

"Well at least they look okay," Shinji said.

"Shinji look," Asuka said, pointing the light at something against the opposite wall.

There, in the corner was a fair sized hole in the wall. Large enough to admit a standing EVA, it seemed to have been punched through the wall and into the neighboring chamber. Asuka stepped forward, and Shinji followed close behind, drawing the Lance from its place on his back, and changing it into the Katana form he favored.

They emerged into the chamber beyond, and discovered another large room. This one had a passageway leading into the distance, and again was large enough to fit an EVA. They looked around for any signs of passage, but other than rubble from the wall, there was nothing. Nothing except.

"Asuka stop," Shinji called. She froze, and looked back. Shinji pointed to the floor, and Asuka passed her beam to the spot. There below him was the strange patterned footprint of Toji's Cherubim.

"Well we know one of the Stooges was here," Asuka said.

"Seen any other signs?"

"None. He probably went into the passage," she motioned.

They turned and traveled into the passageway, looking around as they went. At first the passage appeared to be merely another corridor designed to move the EVA's around the base. When they reached the end of it however, instead of turning and following the next passage to its destination, they looked at the large hole before them.

"Looks like something dug into the base here," Asuka was saying.

"Yeah. Something big," Shinji agreed.

Asuka stepped to the side, and let Shinji walk up next to her. The corridor was wide here, and was spacious enough for the two of them to walk side by side.

"Asuka, turn off the light," Shinji said.

Asuka did as he asked, and was surprised when she could see the corridor around her even without the light source.

"What is it?" she asked.

"It's the infra-red. The walls are hot. There's probably some subsurface currents, maybe even geothermal activity. I don't know. I never studied this facilities specs."

"This isn't part of the regular facility Shinji."

"I know that Asuka, but the original base here might have had a Geothermal system like Nagoya. Anyway, this way we can see without letting whatever's down here seeing us first."

They walked through the tunnels for nearly half an hour, following the twisting turns, until they came to a large open space. There were signs of a fight here, and one of the Cherubs Katana's was lying in the dirt. Shinji picked it up.

"It's Toji's," he said, taking the blade.

They looked around. There were all the signs of a fierce battle. Debris and marks on the wall and floor, showed signs of the battle, but not the victor.

"Looks like Toji put up one hell of a fight," Shinji said.

"But there's no sign of a body."

"So whatever attacked him must have dragged him off, or he followed it out of here, either way, without his sword he's in trouble," Shinji said, motioning her to follow him into the passageway.

They continued to follow the twisting turning passages until they emerged onto a large ledge. The chamber they were within was deep beneath the Earth's surface, and glowed with an unearthly light. It was apparently some kind of old Lava Tube, probably formed when the island of Japan was young. The molten rock had passed out of it, leaving this hollow space.

Movement below them attracted their attention, and Shinji almost shouted in relief when he saw Kensuke. It was a good thing he didn't though, because the head and shoulders of Toji's Cherub came into view a moment later, dragged by something large.

Whatever the thing was, it was long, reptilian, and had eight legs. It had secreted some form of webbing, which looked like spider silk, and had wrapped the two Cherubs up in it.

Shinji motioned for Asuka to step forward, and look over the edge. She did, and saw the thing. Large, grotesque and gray, crawling along the floor of the chamber, it's massive head swinging side to side, it looked like some kind of horrible creature from a monster movie.

They watched as the thing scuttled around the chamber, stopping here and there to poke at some rock, or outcropping. The thing completed its journey around the chamber, and moved up to Kensuke's struggling form.

The things head moved over his body, and snapped down.

Kensuke screamed.

"Kensuke NO!" Shinji shouted, leaping from the edge, sword leading the way, before Asuka knew what was happening. As he fell, both his and the things AT fields snapped up to keep them apart. Shinji pushed, and his AT field penetrated the creatures, allowing him to drop within its defenses.

Shinji landed on the things back, sword flashing and sparking against the its scales. His hits weren't penetrating, weren't doing any

real damage, but it distracted the thing, and it released Kensuke.

Kensuke's Cherubim armor dropped from the things mouth, and there was a large piece missing from the chest armor.

Asuka leapt from the ledge, and landed next to Toji and Kensuke. Her progressive knife flashed, and the silken threads binding the two prone warriors released them. Toji and Kensuke were instantly on their feet, Kensuke clutching at the wound in his chest.

"Shinji get clear," Asuka said, leveling the TPG at the thing.

Shinji either didn't hear, or was ignoring her, so intent was he on the attack. It was huge. Not as big as the first Angel the two of them had fought underwater, but bigger than anything else the two of them had ever faced. It snapped its long neck back, and would have thrown him off, if he hadn't stabbed the blade into the things skull. The thing screamed and crashed into the wall, finally dislodging Shinji and the horrible blade that burned it.

As Shinji slid clear, Asuka fired. The steady stream of energy tore chunks from the things back. The thing screamed again and moved, impossibly agile, out of the line of fire. Asuka ceased fire, as the thing darted away. Shinji was up then, charging after the thing, as it sprinted down the chamber. Asuka tried to hit it with bursts of fire, but it always managed to keep one step out ahead of her, but not so with Shinji.

He leapt upon the things tail, and ran up its back, slicing and jabbing. His hits doing little damage to its armored hide. He'd faced enemies like this before, whose hide was stiff enough to resist the blade of his lance, but usually there was a soft spot. He just had to find it. He whirled the blade around him, striking with impossible speed, and accuracy.

Asuka, Toji, and Kensuke could only marvel at the sight they beheld. The two boys had seen Shinji fight like this before, but only once. When they'd lost one of their own, there on that beach almost two months ago.

Shinji's blade was still flashing, here and there, searching for a weak spot. Suddenly there was a gout of ichor, and the thing screamed again. Shinji crouched down as the thing tried to spin around, and shake free of him, with no success. His blade snapped out again, and this time one of the things legs dropped free.

It thrashed again, and Shinji fell off, crashing to the ground. The thing was on him instantly, biting and stomping. He rolled under it, keeping one step ahead of the stomping feet. He saw a slight glow from the things side, and noted that the missing leg was starting to re-grow.

"Great, just what I need, this thing can regenerate," he said.

"Shinji get clear," Asuka pleaded.

"I can't," he called, rolling away from two more stomping feet. His face was close to the things belly, and he could see the joints between the scales. He jabbed the sword up between them, and felt a satisfying bite of blade and flesh. More dark ichor oozed from the things belly, and it rolled away from him, thrashing and crashing its long serpentine body around the chamber.

Shinji rolled clear, and clutched the Lance Blade in his hands. He concentrated, and the Lance began to shift, from the Katana he usually used to, back to the twin headed Lance form. Asuka instantly had a bad flashback, remembering the last time she'd seen a Lance up close. It had been one of the false lances wielded by the MP EVA's, and it had struck out her left eye. She flinched, and the eye ached in remembered pain. It didn't matter that this body wasn't the same one that had experienced the stabbing pain, her soul remembered it.

Shinji twirled the Lance, and stabbed at the creature. Its AT field sparked, as he penetrated its flesh, and the thing thrashed harder. Suddenly it was back on its feet, and scampering off into one of the tunnels.

"Don't let it get away," he shouted, running after it. Almost as an afterthought, he tossed Toji's Katana at the young man.

Toji caught it, tested its weight, and followed him. Kensuke, drew his own blade, still in its sheath, and charged.

"Couldn't they have just let me shoot it?" Asuka sighed, before following the three impetuous young men.

Shinji was following the thing through the twists and turns of the passage; he could hear it ahead, and his friends just behind. He ran out from the tunnel, and into another large chamber, and was hit from behind as he ran forward. The thing had entered here and doubled back, jumping on him as he exited the passageway. The Lance was knocked from his grip as he sprawled on the ground. Shinji rolled quickly from side to side, avoiding the snapping jaws that descended upon him.

'This thing is fast,' Shinji thought to himself.

Kensuke and Toji were hot on Shinji's heels. They came on then, slashing and hacking with their steel Katana's. They were even less successful than Shinji had been, but they were keeping the creature distracted. Asuka rounded the corner and saw the creature there, attacking Shinji. She raised her weapon and unleashed a blast of proton energy at it. The steady stream of fire raked deep gashes across the things back and head. It howled in agony, raising its head toward the ceiling.

Shinji, seeing his chance, rolled free, thankful to be out from underneath the creature once again. He dashed away from it as Asuka continued to pour fire into it, and leapt for the Lance. His fingers wrapped around the shaft and he brought it to bear against the creature. The creature finally dodged out of Asuka's way, and turned to snap at Kensuke and Toji, who are now standing almost up with the creature's rear legs. The first snap almost got Toji, but he ducked and rolled out of the way. Kensuke, however, was so busy paying attention to Toji, but he did not notice the creature's tail swinging up behind him. There was a fierce impact, and Kensuke found himself thrown across the hall.

Shinji reached down and helped his friend to his feet.

"That things nastier than those crocodiles we used to watch on television," Shinji said.

"Yeah and uglier to," Kensuke agreed.

Toji eased around the thing and over to where Shinji and Kensuke were standing.

Asuka continued her stuttering fire of energy, usually missing as the creature dodged out of the way. When she did connect, however, the beast would thrash and writhe in agony, until it escaped the terrible light. Suddenly, the thing lunged at her, and she was forced to dodge back into the tunnel. Bent double, like some sort of horseshoe, its back was now exposed to the three waiting warriors. Shinji led the charge, the Lance held before him, set for a killing blow. The thing howled again as the Lance penetrated its back, and spun on them wrenching the Lance from his grasp, and knocking over Suzuhara as it turned. Its great head descended, and snapped at Shinji, who dodged, but was not able to win clear entirely. The thing caught his arm in its teeth, and bit down savagely. Shinji felt hundreds of small needles pierce the armor of the EVA. Toji, meanwhile, had moved to decide again, and leapt on the creature's back as it attacked Shinji, and leaned hard on it.

The Lance penetrated through the creature's neck, its two points sticking through the other side. The things screamed again, and released Shinji, but did not cease its attack. Toji, standing on the things back now, wrenched the Lance from it, and leapt free once again, tossing the Lance to Shinji. The thing was losing blood now, but showed no signs of stopping. Indeed, its leg that Shinji had worked so hard to chop off, had now fully re-grown. They appeared no closer to defeating this creature than they had been at the start of the battle.

The creature raised its head up to its full height, like some kind of giant Cobra, preparing to strike. Shinji right in front of it, and jabbed the Lance upward. The twin blades penetrated the creature's skull, and exited, stabbing up into the ceiling. It began to shake and writhe, trying to get free. Suddenly it gave the convulsive shudder and was still.

Before warriors stood there looking at the thing; uncertain what to do next. Asuka with the first to react, stepping out of the shadows of the tunnel, and firing blast after blast into the thing until the proton energy being burned clean through. She worked the beam back and forth until a wide hole was made and the creature's body nearly severed in two. With a final burst from her gun, Asuka chopped the thing in two behind its first set of legs.

The Legionnaire shuddered and screamed. Both parts of its body convulsed and shook. The rear six legs and the tail section thrashed upon the ground, rolling and twisting as it's dying nerve impulses misfired, and tried to tell the muscles to do a hundred different things at once. The upper body, neck and head shook upon the Lance, still stuck to the ceiling. Finally, after a minute of violent action, both halves were still.

Now, with the creature quite obviously dead, Shinji reached up and extracted the Lance from its' skull. All four of them were rather surprised to note that the things head remained stuck to the ceiling. Asuka walked up behind it and kicked fiercely, expecting that it was only stuck on a stalactite. There was a crumble of stone and gravel as the head fell free of the ceiling, and it took a moment for the falling dust clear. Protruding from the ceiling was a strange white flat shape.

"What the hell is that?" Toji asked.

"I'm not sure," Shinji said, poking at it with the end of his Lance. More dust and debris fell down upon him and covered the body of the dead Legionnaire. A few more feet of the thing was revealed, and it was now obvious that it was not circular in form, but elliptical in shape. It was mostly white with a gray centerline. Asuka recognized it immediately.

"It's a Lance. One of the reproductions that Seele's MP EVA used," she said.

"Are you sure?" Shinji asked.

"The freaking things took out my eye. You don't think I'd remember them?" she said.

"But how did it get here?" Shinji asked.

"Yeah, weren't all the MP EVA's crucified on their Lances?" Kensuke asked.

"Yes, and, and they fell back to the earth. They are scattered all over. One must of landed above us, and the Lance penetrated all this way," Shinji mused.

"So give me a hand," Toji said, attempting to wrench the pseudo-Lance from the ceiling. Shinji and Toji grasped at the visible part of the pseudo-Lance and pulled, but they could not dislodge it.

"Toji stand back, I'm going to try something," Shinji said.

Motioning Toji back, Shinji reached a hand toward the pseudo-Lance, and concentrated his will upon it. Long moments passed and nothing happened, then the Lance flowed like Quicksilver, and poured out of the ceiling into Shinji's hand. Shinji examined the pseudo-Lance. Visually there was no difference between the two Lances that he held, but he sensed something he couldn't define. He concentrated upon the pseudo-Lance, willing it to transform, to change into another weapon, but nothing happened. He then concentrated on the blade form that the MP EVA's had used, and the pseudo-Lance shifted. Shinji looked at the broad bladed weapon, and glanced up at Toji.

"You want this?" he asked.

Toji nodded, holding out his hands. Shinji handed him the blade.

"How do I make it change?" he asked.

"Concentrate on the shape you want," Shinji said.

Toji did so, but nothing happened.

"Nothing's happening," he said.

"I think the pseudo-Lance's only have the two forms," Shinji observed.

Toji nodded, and concentrated again. The pseudo-Lance shifted into its spear form.

"I did it!" Toji shouted.

"Great. Now, can we get out of this hell hole?" Asuka asked.

"Yeah, I think they're probably pretty worried about us up above," Kensuke said, stepping toward Asuka, at the entrance to the cavern.

"Just a minute," Shinji said, kneeling down to examine the remains of the Legionnaire.

"What are you looking for Shinji?" Asuka asked.

"This thing's S-2 Unit," he said. "This thing might try to regenerate after we leave, I want to make sure it can't. Ah, there it is." He felt the slippery sphere deep within the neck cavity, and gripped it firmly. He jerked hard, and the sphere came free. He held it up triumphantly.

"Ha. This ought to brighten up Ritsuko's day," he said, "we never recovered one of these things intact before."

"Fine, you've got your trophy. Now lets get out of here," Asuka said curtly, and, turning around, walked back into the passageway.

The three young men stood there looking at each other for a moment before following Asuka out of the chamber.

Forty-five minutes later, the four giant humanoids re-emerged into the NERV base, and looked around Central Dogma.

"Shit, the Magi," Kensuke said, "I totally forgot about them. That's the whole reason we're here to begin with."

"Think we can recover them ourselves?" Shinji asked.

"Yeah, no sweat," Kensuke said, "Doctor Akagi was going to have Toji and I do all the work recovering them anyway. The recovery teams were just here to transport the units back to Nagoya-2."

"How do we recover them?" Asuka said.

"Hmm. Let me see," Kensuke said, feeling around the base of the tower that the command station and Magi were set upon.

"Here it is," he said, and pushed his hands under the tower, lifting. The entire tower, maybe 30 feet of it, lifted free, bringing the Magi with it.

"Is that it?" Toji asked.

"Yeah, now we just have to get this up to the trucks," Kensuke said.

"Um, yeah, about that," Shinji explained, "We didn't want any unnecessary casualties, so we sent Ritsuko and the others home."

"Meaning?" Toji asked.

"Meaning you and Kensuke are gonna have to take this thing home on foot," Shinji said.

"Oh great. Thanks Ikari," Kensuke said, looking at Toji in exasperation.

"What about you two, aren't you going to walk back with us?" Toji asked.

"Nope," said Asuka, "We were on leave, and as soon as we get back, we're going to give the S-2 Unit to Ritsuko, and go back on leave."

"But aren't you walking back with us?" Toji asked again.

"Nope, we can BOTH fly," Asuka said, and started to crawl through the small tunnel, that lead back to the entry shaft, and the exit.

"No fair, she can fly too?" Kensuke whined.

"Yep," Shinji said, following his girlfriend into the tunnel.

"Sucks to be us, dude," Toji said, shifting his pseudo-Lance, and crawling in after Shinji.

"Tell me about it."

Next: on Episode 3:03 of Neon Genesis Evangelion

The new Magi system is activated, and Japan and Germany are able to re-establish contact. The time arrives, however, for farewells and goodbyes to be said, as the first Cherubim's are dispatched to Germany with Ritsuko.

It's Evangelion Episode 3:03 Communications

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Episode 3:03 Communications.

Presumed date is June 11th, 2019

Two days of manic remodeling had taken place in the heart of NERV Nagoya-2, and the heart of the former Central Operations and Emergency Command Center was looking almost exactly like the Central Dogma Facility of the former NERV headquarters. Everything, from the computer consoles that the technicians sat at, to the three large central processing units that were the Magi.

Ritsuko had spent two days with Maya, working non-stop, and driving her technicians to exhaustion, trying to adapt the power and data connections that were meant for the Shepherd system to service the Magi. She had finally completed the final power taps for the computers some nine hours ago, and were preparing the system to integrate with the Shepherd, and assume control of its functions.

Ritsuko came crawling out of the central Magi system, and nodded to Maya tiredly.

"Doctor Akagi says we're ready to begin Activation, Commander Katsuragi," she called up to Misato's desk. Misato and Kaji stood up, and walked down to the operations deck, to watch the proceedings first hand.

"Ready Ritsuko?" she asked.

"I think so Misato. I only hope that being without power for so long hasn't caused damage to the central core of the units," Ritsuko nodded.

"You wanna say a prayer before we flip the switch?" Misato asked.

"I've already said as many as I dared, to as many gods, and in as many languages as I know," Ritsuko explained.

"Very well. Begin Magi activation sequence," Misato said, turning to the technicians scattered around the operations area.

Aoba, Hyuga, and Ibuki sat down, and Aoba and Hyuga took keys from around their necks and inserted them into the locks before their stations.

"Begin activation on my mark," Ibuki called. "Three & two & one & MARK!"

Aoba and Hyuga flipped their keys to the left.

There was a flash of light, and the control room went dark.

"Ritsuko," Misato growled.

"It's not my fault," the scientist grumped.

Suddenly the computer screens across the command center lit up and lines of code, and BIOS data began to scroll across them.

Ritsuko glanced over Maya's shoulder to watch the techs primary monitor, which was the real link to the heart of the Magi system.

Magi System activating & & & & completed

Magi System loading BIOS & & & & completed

Magi System Operating System & & & loaded

Personality Gestalt System & & & & activated

Units Solomon, David, Aaron & & & online

We are the Magi &. God is in his heaven, and all is right with the world.

"Greetings Doctor Akagi, how may we help you?" the screen said.

"How did they know you were here?" Maya asked, surprised.

"That's probably a hold over from when my mother designed the software. They don't really know that I'm not her, they just assume that a Doctor Akagi' will be here when they activate," Ritsuko explained.

"On the contrary Doctor Akagi. We are well aware of who you are, and are pleased to be of service to you," the screen read.

"How the hell?" Ritsuko asked.

"Voice recognition," Misato guessed, "They're probably using the VA system that Shepherd utilizes. Probably tapped into his data core, too."

"Correct Commander Katsuragi, we have received our update from the Shepherd, and have now assumed control of all of his functions. We await your orders."

"Begin standard operations mode, and I would like you to attempt to contact the nearest Mil-Sat in orbit," Misato said.

"Affirmative Commander. Opening Communications link with Mil-Sat unit KE-2214. Please stand by. Communications request from NERV Berlin, will you accept?"

"On the screen," Misato said, hardly able to contain her excitement.

The main holographic screen in front of the room flickered into life, and the screen cleared a few moments later to reveal a command room almost identical to the one they now occupied.

"WE DID IT!!!" the technicians shouted, and the cheering and shouting flashed through all of the personnel on duty.

On the screen, people could be seen cheering and gesturing at the main screen, looking back at their Japanese counterparts.

Suddenly a large sub-window popped up on the upper right side of the screen. An older man looked out at them.

"Commander Katsuragi?" he said.

Misato stepped forward, and activated a small camera on one of the comm. screens.

"I'm commander Katsuragi, am I correct in assuming that you are Commander Berg of NERV Berlin?"

"That would be me, Commander, and I'm happy to say that it's a pleasure to finally meet you."

"Likewise, Commander Berg. I've heard good things about you from Ms. Soryu."

"She's alright? No problems then?" he asked.

"Asuka is fine, she should be here shortly, in fact, we're going to be conducting a briefing, now that we've got the Magi up and running. We're planning to send eight of our Cherub units there, to help you defend the base, if that meets with your approval?"

"By all means. We've been sitting here watching you and your, Cherub units' you call them? Sitting here watching your Cherub Units fight off those Angels, with Ikari's help, terrified that we were a target as well. I'm sure Ms. Soryu has told you of the recent attack on this facility."

"Yes, and that's something we're going to be discussing soon, as well as a number of other things."

"Guten Morgen, Kommandant Berg. Wie geht es Ihnen?" called a happy female voice from the rear of the gallery.

"Wunderbar, Asuka, und dir?"

"Ach, ich könnte nicht glücklicher sein," Asuka replied. The Japanese personnel were looking around, like they were lost.

"Sorry, I sometimes forget that not everyone speaks German," the base commander said. "Asuka, for shame, none of your friends have any idea what you're saying, stick to Japanese, for now."

"Certainly Commander Berg. I'm delighted to see you, is everything still alright there?" she asked.

"It's been quiet as a church around here lately. No excitement at all since you left, in fact. We watched your flight over Europe and Asia here, as you might expect, and have been anxiously awaiting contact with Commander Katsuragi and yourself since we saw the two, um, Cherubim bring the Magi units back to Nagoya-2."

"Well, I think Misato has a briefing for us in a little while, and I'm sure she'd like to include you in that briefing, if I'm not mistaken," Asuka said, looking at Misato.

"Most definitely. It's not too early for you there is it Commander?"

"We're eight hours behind you there, Commander Katsuragi, it's just a little after four a.m. here."

"Alright then, I'll convene a meeting of my team in one hour, and we'll have the Magi provide a video conference with you there."

"Sounds good. In the meantime I'll have my crews send you all the data we've collected since Third Impact, and if you could likewise do the same, we'll both be ready for the meeting when it begins." Misato nodded at the suggestion.

"I'll see you in one hour then," Commander Berg said, and signed off.

" & so Doctor Akagi will be coming over with the first four Cherubs. The transports will lay over there for 24 hours for servicing and refueling, and return to Japan, for another 24 hour layover. They will then return to Germany with the final four Cherubim," Misato

explained.

"Very good, Commander Katsuragi. We'll make the necessary preparations, and have our hangars ready for the Cherubs. I have crews going through the EVA Maintenance and Production Facility now. It's hard to believe that we had this entire portion of the base concealed from us by Rotmal," Berg said, his image filling the wall screen at the end of the conference room.

"Not really, Commander. Rotmal had to be a Legionnaire, or one of their agents. With none of the original NERV personnel there to tell you the real secrets of the base, there's no way you could have known. Rotmal was very careful to hide all traces of that part of the facility," Asuka said.

"Anyway, Doctor Akagi will evaluate the condition of the weapons cache that Asuka reported, and oversee distribution of those weapons to the Cherub Forces there, as well as preparing a shipment for return to Japan. We'll leave two of the transports there, and bring two home. That way we each have the ability to move Cherub's over long distances quickly," Misato finished.

"In the meantime, Commander, I'd like you to go through your records, and see if you can pinpoint the final resting places of SEELE's Mass Production EVA's," Misato added.

"Can I ask why?"

"Ikari and Soryu recently discovered the pseudo-Lance of Longinus belonging to one of them, and we've been able to recover it. We believe it will give the Cherubs a hand up in their battles with the Legionnaires," Ritsuko said.

"And it wouldn't do to have weapons such as those fall into the hands of hostile forces," Commander Berg added.

"That too," she affirmed.

"I'll have my teams see what they can find in the databanks. There may be little information, however, for if Rotmal was able to take over the base, he may have been able to hide that data."

"We don't believe so. The surveillance footage would have been stored in the satellites until your power grid came back online, and your Magi were able to download the files. Once that data enters the system, it stays there. It can be moved, or even hidden, but I guarantee you it's still there," Ritsuko said.

"Alright, Doctor, we'll start looking. If we don't find it, though, I'm afraid you'll have another job to do when you get here," Berg said.

"Quite alright, Commander," Ritsuko nodded.

"Now if that concludes our business I would like to take a moment for some personal messages," Commander Berg said, looking expectant.

"I have nothing else. Ritsuko?" Misato asked, and the Doctor shook her head.

"Well then, Asuka my dear, I understand that you made it there safely?"

"Yes, Commander," she said, "not a bit of trouble."

"I have had only the briefest of chances to scan the data that Commander Katsuragi has provided, but, please, I am dying of curiosity. Was your young man there?" he asked.

Asuka blushed, and looked away.

Misato and Ritsuko shared a look, as both women shared the same thought. This is NOT the Asuka Langley Soryu that left Japan.'

"Where are my manners? Commander Berg, I'd like to introduce you to the designated Pilot of EVA Unit-01, Shinji Ikari," she blurted out, poking Shinji, trying to get him to stand up.

"Ow. Asuka. What?" he stammered, before figuring out what she wanted, and rising to face the screen.

"Commander Berg. It is a pleasure to meet you. Asuka has told me a little of her stay in Germany, and it's good to know she has made friends like you," he said, with a bow.

This is not the young man in our files,' Berg thought to himself, noticing Shinji's bearing and posture. Gone was the insecure little boy who was mentioned in the personnel files. In his place was a young man who appeared quite confident, and held himself with the assurance of a warrior born.

"It is an honor to meet THE Shinji Ikari," Berg said, standing to return the bow.

Shinji flushed, and muttered a thank you before sitting down.

Asuka beamed at him, and wrapped her arms around his shoulders in a fierce hug.

"So you two are & together & then?" Berg asked Asuka.

"Yes, sir," Asuka said, a smile breaking out on her face.

"Pilot Ikari, I expect you to take good care of Ms. Soryu, she's very important to us."

"Not nearly as important as she is to me, Commander," Shinji said.

Asuka flushed again, and captured his arm in hers, hugging it fiercely.

Commander Berg smiled at them, "That is good to hear, Pilot Ikari. Commander Katsuragi, if that is all, I need to tell my teams what we have planned so they can fuel up the tankers, and get them airborne for the rendezvous."

"Very well. We'll talk to you at the next scheduled meeting," Misato said, and broke the link.

"Now that we've taken care of that, have you been able to find out anything from the S2-Unit that Shinji and Asuka brought back?" Misato asked Ritsuko.

"Very little. Most of the last two days have been spent with the Magi system. Professor Fuyutsuki has been down in the Cherubim Nursery getting the next group going. After the embryos are established, he's going to turn his attention to the S2-Unit. This is the first totally intact S2 we've ever recovered."

"Any idea why this one didn't explode like a lot of the others?" Asuka asked.

"I haven't had too much time to think about it yet, but if I had to guess, I'd think it had something to do with your gun."

"The Positron Gatling?" Asuka asked.

"Exactly. Something about the way it interacted with the things body, kept the S2 from detonating. That, and Shinji's Lance attack. I'll know more when I return from Germany."

"Where are you keeping it in the meantime?" Shinji wanted to know.

"In the research bay next to the nursery," Ritsuko said.

"Alright, Ritsuko, we'll deal with that when you get back, if Fuyutsuki doesn't get started on it before do," Misato said. "In the meantime, you have a trip to get ready for."

"So, I guess I need to start packing," Ritsuko said.

"Don't take too much. The German branch has some really great clothes in their shops," Asuka said.

"Really, I'll have to make use of them then," Ritsuko said.

"Well if you two ladies are done, I think I'd like to get home. I still haven't had lunch yet today, and I really would rather cook something than eat at the cafeteria," Shinji said, standing up to leave.

"Okay, Shinji, we'll see you tonight," Misato said.

"Tonight?"

"At the farewell party for the Cherubim pilots," Misato explained.

"Oh, right. I guess I need to decide who's going to go, right?"

"No. Ritsuko and I already arranged that. We worked it out with Suzuhara and Aida. So you two just show up at the West Hall at seven, alright?" Misato said.

"Alright," Shinji said, taking Asuka's hand as she stood up.

"Goodbye Shinji," Misato said, as the younger woman started dragging him out of the room.

"Ah, young love," Ritsuko laughed.

"Yes. They have no appreciation for simple anticipation," came a low sultry male voice.

"Ryouji," Misato gasped as her husband wrapped his arms around her from behind, and softly nibbled at her neck.

"Geez, you two are worse than you were in College," Ritsuko said, "Aren't you supposed to stop that once you get married."

"No, and unless you want to watch, I suggest you get packing," Misato suggested, turning to kiss her husband.

"Sex fiends," Ritsuko said softly, as she left.

"Only with you," Misato said, kissing Ryouji, as he drew her into his soft demanding embrace.

Next: on Episode 3:04 of Neon Genesis Evangelion

After a busy day of work, the base prepares to say goodbye to the members of the Cherubim that have been selected to go to

Germany.

It's Evangelion Episode 3:04 A Night To Remember

Thanks to those of you who pre-read and helped with my German. Unfortunately it's been so long, I can't remember who you are. (I'm pretty sure Puddle of LCL helped, and Maybe Jimmy Wolk?)

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Episode 3:04 A Night To Remember

Presumed date is June 11th, 2019

As Seven O'clock approached, Shinji and Asuka were back at his house, preparing for the farewell party.

"So did you ever pick out what you were going to wear?" he called from the bedroom.

"Hikari helped me pick out a dress this afternoon. We spent two hours in the Dress shop picking out just the right one. Then I had to find shoes to match. Something else popped up while we were at it, but we took care of it pretty fast. What about you?"

"Well, I don't think my legs look good, but this dress should be okay," Shinji deadpanned.

From the bathroom, Asuka could be heard laughing.

"Anata Baka. That is a visual I could have done without. Although the sight of you in my spare plug suit is a vision I'll never forget. Seriously, what are you wearing?"

"Well, I thought about my Tux, but I think, since this is a farewell party for my team, I'm going with my Dress Uniform."

"Good, I can't wait to see you in it. Hikari told me it looks good on you," she finished.

Shinji fidgeted with the collar buttons, until they lay comfortable across his neck. He looked down at his shoes. They were bright and shining, but he probably could shine them a little more. Of course that would mean taking off his uniform, so he didn't stain them. He decided that the shine would have to do, because he wasn't putting this thing on again.

There was a knock at the back door, and Kensuke and Toji came in, both, also, wearing their dress uniforms.

"You guys are wearing you're Dress Whites too?"

"Hikari and Nozomi threatened us with bodily harm if we didn't," Kensuke said.

"Yeah. Apparently they spent the afternoon shopping for new dresses, and picked theirs out with our uniforms in mind. I tried to put on my Tux and almost got my head handed to me by Hikari,' Toji explained.

Shinji laughed, "Then I guess its' a good idea I decided to wear the Uniform instead of the Tux."

The three young men got themselves sodas out of Shinji's refrigerator, and sat down on his back deck, to await their women.

They weren't waiting long.

Hikari and Nozomi had, unnoticed, walked through Shinji's front door, and met Asuka as she came down.

"Ready?" Hikari asked Asuka.

"As I'll ever be," she said, beaming in reply.

They walked through the house, and exited the back door. Kensuke was the first to notice the trio.

"Wow," he gasped, and the other two young men turned to see what he was staring at.

Hikari was clad in a classically styled emerald green silk dress. Her hair was pulled back, but rather than it's usual ponytail, she'd put it up into a French Braid.

Nozomi was clad in a stunning black silk dress, which had gold and silver flecks splattered over it. Her dark hair was pulled up in a bun, accentuating her long neck, and bare shoulders.

Shinji could barely see Asuka standing behind the pair.

The two women held their hands out, and Toji and Kensuke stepped up to them, and took the proffered limb. As the women separated, Asuka, standing between and behind, was revealed.

Shinji felt a rush of blood to his face, as well as other parts of his body, and could do nothing more than stand there, his mouth agape.

Asuka was wearing a stunning evening gown. Cut low, it revealed and accentuated her cleavage. The brilliant cobalt blue matched her eyes, and the contrast with the fiery tresses, cascading down her back, one errant lock of her bangs curling mischievously under her chin, was too much for Shinji.

'If there is truly a god in Heaven, and you let me have just this one night, I swear I will ask for nothing more in this life,' he thought. 'Well, at least until I really want something else this bad, and then I'll make the same promise, but I'm sure you understand.'

"Shinji?" Asuka said softly.

"Yeah?" he croaked out, mouth suddenly too dry, and tongue sticking to the bottom of his mouth, feeling like a piece of dentist's gauze.

"Are you alright?" she asked.

"Uh huh," he nodded slightly, staring, as Asuka stepped forward, and raised a single slender finger to his bottom lip. She teased the lip with a slight flick, and then used her fingers to lift his chin. His teeth met in an audible click.

"How do I look?" she asked, in a soft sultry voice, stepping up to him. She slowly wrapped her arms around his neck, and gazed up into his eyes.

"Mmm," he managed to get out, still dazed.

She smiled up at him as she leaned in, stroking his chest softly.

"Don't you like the way I look? Hikari and I took hours finding just the right dress. But if you don't like it I can go take it off right now," she said, breathing hotly into his ear.

Several conflicting thoughts raced through the young mans mind at once. 'Wow!' being the one that kept repeating the most often. Next was another one, that didn't seem to have anything rational attached to it, but was instead composed of desperate passion. 'Yeah & take it off & mmm.' His eyes glazed slightly as this thought materialized, but he dashed it down, knowing that they couldn't

skip this occasion easily.

Even if it would be worth getting killed by Misato to do it.

Asuka pulled back, leaving her arms about his neck, and pouted, sticking her lower lip out, like an upset child.

"Shinji," she grumped, "why won't you say anything?"

Kensuke and Toji shared a look, pleased that their friend had been rendered speechless, and, for once, did not feel the need to interrupt. It would be up to Ikari to extricate himself from this one.

Shinji, unable to resist another second, leaned into her, and brushed her lips with his, murmuring, because he didn't trust the strength of his own voice.

"You are the most beautiful woman I have ever seen, and I have no idea what I ever did to deserve you," he said, so softly that only she heard him.

Her hands, which were still around his neck, clutched the back of his head, as she tilted her own slightly to the right, and closed her eyes. Her lips parted, and she met his, pressing softly into him, her tongue gently exploring the boundary between the two of them.

They might have yielded to the temptation then, and stayed there the rest of the night, but four soft "Awwwwwww"s were heard behind Shinji, who stiffened when he realized that he'd forgotten about his friends and the party they were supposed to be going to.

He pulled away from the kiss then, and gazed down at Asuka, his eyes filled with desperate longing. Asuka's twinkled back up at him mischievously.

"I get to drive," she said, reaching into her shoulder bag, which he only now noticed, and extracting the keys to her precious BMW.

"You still remember how to drive it?" Shinji asked, "It's been three years."

"Oh, you, of course I remember how to drive."

"Well then the next question I have is: Can you still drive wearing that dress?"

"If not, I'll just have to take it off while I'm driving," she said, with a challenging glint in her eyes.

"Hey, Guys & you're taking Toji's rig aren't you?" Shinji called over his shoulder.

"Yeah, Ikari, we are. Have fun you two. We'll see you at the party," Toji said, leading Hikari off the back of the deck, and around to his car. Kensuke and Nozomi followed sedately behind them.

Asuka made to turn and walk towards the garage then, but Shinji caught her left arm, just as it slid free.

"You're not in a hurry are you?" he asked playfully, drawing her to him. This time, however, he maneuvered her so that her back was to him, and he wrapped his arms around her sides, hands clasped gently on her stomach.

"Why, Pilot Ikari? Is there something else I should be thinking about, other than the dance?"

"Just me," he breathed, gently dragging his lips across the nape of her neck, and breathing softly into her hair.

She like the way his breathe tickled her, and sagged into him slightly.

"Shinji, we really should go. They'll all be waiting for us," she said, as if trying to convince herself.

Shinji released her then, slowly, and Asuka stood up straight, shifting her dress ever so slightly.

"Alright, lets go. The sooner we go, the sooner we can leave," he said.

Asuka laughed. 'Not if I have anything to say about it,' she thought to herself, smiling over her shoulder at him.

They walked out to the garage, where Shinji uncovered Asuka's red sports car, allowing the two pilots to get into the car. Asuka turned the engine over, and the car started instantly. Evidently Shinji's minor maintenance of the vehicle had kept it in fine shape. She backed out of the driveway, and turned into the lane, that led out of their neighborhood.

It took them twenty minutes to come to the Hall that had been chosen for the party, and Shinji noticed a fair number of cars were already parked in the lot. There was a spot, however, in the front of the building that had a small painted sign tacked to it reading, "Reserved for Ikari/Soryu." Asuka pulled in, shut the motor off, and she and Shinji walked up to the front doors, holding hands.

She brought him up short, then, spinning him easily around, and turning a critical eye on his Uniform.

"Hmm & You could have done a better job on your shoes," she commented.

"Yeah, and I could have taken my Uniform off to polish them, and we'd still be at the house,' he teased.

"Oh you," she grumped, and straightened his collar with a twist.

"Can we go in?" he asked, impatiently.

"In a hurry?" she asked him.

"Only to leave," he said, leering at her again.

She threw her head back and laughed.

"God, I love you," she said, kissing him on the lips, and pulling back before he could deepen the kiss, "Come on, lets go in."

As they came through the door, Shinji noted the bar that was set up on one side, and a buffet on the other. The large tiled floor at the heart of the hall was cleared, and tables and chairs were scattered around the edges. Against the far wall, a stage had been constructed, and there were a number of musicians playing softly.

Many of Shinji's pilots were already dancing around on the floor, swaying to the slow song the orchestra was playing. The remainder of the pilots were sitting at the tables arranged around the dance floor.

Shinji spied Misato, and allowed Asuka to lead him through the light crowd to her and Ryouji. Asuka caught Misato's attention, and released his hand as the two women embraced, and began talking excitedly about each others clothing.

"So she got you here in your Dress White's too?" Ryouji asked.

"Yeah. I was lucky though; I'd already decided that I was going to wear them," Shinji said.

Ryouji Kaji laughed, "Lucky you. I was all dressed and ready to go when Misato came down wearing that sequined black evening dress and told me that we clashed, so I'd have to change. She even made me shave."

Shinji laughed, knowing how Ryouji hated to shave, even to this day, and seemed to always have a day or two's growth of beard.

Shinji felt a pair of hands creep around him from behind, and watched as Misato glided smoothly back to her husband's side.

"Shinji you look wonderful tonight," Misato said.

Shinji blushed and mumbled a soft thank you.

"Dance with me," came a soft, breathy whisper in his ear.

"If you'll excuse us," he said to the older couple, and turned to capture Asuka's hand, and lead her onto the floor.

The song was just ending as they finally got into position, and they looped their arms around each other in the casual embrace of long time partners. Then a new song started, and they slowly swayed back and forth, more or less, in time with the music.

Asuka was mildly surprised that Shinji could dance so well, but then remembered what she'd been told about his dead friend.

"She did a good job," Asuka said.

"Hmm? Who?" Shinji asked.

"You're old dance partner," she said.

"Oh."

Shinji didn't say anything more, but cast his eyes downward, trying to avoid Asuka's gaze.

"It's okay Shinji, I'm not upset. I just wish I could have met her," Asuka said.

Shinji smiled lopsidedly, and raised his eyes to Asuka's.

"I wish you could have met her too. I think you'd have liked her," he said.

"If what I've heard is true, I'm sure I would have," She smiled, trying to ease some of the hurt she could see in his dark blue eyes. "Do you want to talk about it?"

"No. I mean, it's not like we were lovers, Asuka, it's just that &" he trailed off, unable to convey his thoughts.

"It's that for once, you found someone like yourself. She opened up to you, and let you open up to her. She was your friend," Asuka finished with a slight twist of her head, and a smile on her face.

"So & you're not upset?"

"No Shinji, I'm not upset. You should know that by now," Asuka said.

Shinji smiled back at her and nodded.

"In fact, I have a friend who did much the same for me," Asuka said.

"Oh?" Shinji said, a bit surprised by this. "Do I get to meet this friend?"

"Why Pilot Ikari, it that jealousy I hear in your voice?"

"Maybe a little," Shinji admitted weakly.

"Well not to worry. 'She' wants to meet you to," Asuka teased.

Shinji felt as if a great weight had suddenly been lifted off his heart, and smiled back down at Asuka. She looked mischievously back at him.

"The first chance we get, I'd like to take you to the town I spent most of the last couple years in. The people there are so great. I can't wait to introduce you.," she said.

"I think we can figure something out. We'll probably have to take the EVA's though, just in case any Legionnaires decide to attack," he answered.

They shared their dance, reluctantly releasing each other when it was finally over, but continuing to clasp one another's hands as they went back to the table they were to share with their friends. Misato and Ryouji were there, chatting with Ritsuko and Maya, both of whom looked resplendent in their sequined gowns.

"All ready for your trip Doctor?" Asuka asked.

"We're all packed and ready to go. We'll be leaving first thing in the morning. Maya and I are taking the lead transport out of the airbase," Ritsuko answered.

"So, have you told them yet?" Shinji asked, motioning to the other pilots who were seated at a nearby table.

"We informed them this afternoon of our final selections. Aida and Suzuhara had already talked the possibility over with them, so they weren't surprised."

"Then I guess we'd better say our farewells," Shinji said, tugging Asuka away from the others, and towards the departing pilots.

Shinji's Cherubim pilots were pleased to see him and Asuka, and quickly pulled out a couple chairs so they could sit down. They chatted happily for quite some time, remembering simpler times, battles they had won, and sharing their hopes for the future.

"We'll set up some sort of rotation, so that you guys aren't stuck in Berlin," Shinji explained, when someone asked if they'd be allowed to return to Nagoya anytime in the future.

"In the mean time we're counting on you guys to protect Berlin, and the weapons stockpile there," Asuka said.

The pilots assured Asuka that they would indeed do their best, and wished her and Ikari their best, as she stood to leave, dragging Shinji up with her.

"I'm sure you'd love to stay here and talk all night long, but there's other things on my agenda for the evening," she said, pulling Shinji away.

Shinji had thought that they would end up spending the whole night here, visiting, and partying with their friends, but he was surprised when Asuka dragged him through the hall, offering their apologies, and then quickly herded him out of the hall.

"Asuka, I thought we were going to stay and enjoy the party?" he asked.

"And we were going to, but something's come up, and I had to change our plans."

"What's come up?" he asked, slightly concerned.

"This," she replied, and pushed herself up to him, locking her arms around his head, and drawing him into a deep and passionate kiss.

It was nearly five passion filled minutes before Asuka again allowed him to speak.

"Well if its' THAT important, why didn't you say something earlier?"

Asuka wrinkled her brows at him, and frowned, pushing him into her car.

"Shut up and drive," she said, handing him the keys.

"Yes Ma'am," he said, and turning the key, gunned the engine, and headed for home.

Next: on Episode 3:05 of Neon Genesis Evangelion

After a pleasant evening spent enjoying each others company, its back to business as usual. Plans are put into operation, and a few new options become available. Ritsuko's research at the Berlin base will yield some unexpected results, that may change our hero's lives forever.

It's Evangelion Episode 3:05 The Quest Begins

>> Authors Notes

Sorry about the abrupt ending of this chapter, but it ended up being one that came at the end of one writing session, and the beginning of another. I had plans for this but couldn't remember them, and didn't want to abandon what I'd already done. As it was, I had to remove almost half of the story, as it turned out to be quite the LEMON, and most of the sites that host my work won't accept Lemons. So I cut it short, and decided to go ahead and write on the rest of the story.

Gomen.

OMAKE

Across the base, two women were nervously looking around the outside of the shoe store.

"So?" asked the first woman, looking anxious.

"Well, she hasn't answered her cell phone for about four hours, and she never made it home," the second woman answered.

"Well the lights are still on, try the door," said the first.

The second woman reached out, and opened up the door, glancing inside.

Looking back at her companion, she proceeded inside the store, her friend following.

"There's no one here," the first woman commented.

"She has to be here, look, her purse is behind the register," the second woman said, holding up the item.

"Then where is she?"

"Maybe she's in the back. Maybe she got locked in the storage room," the second woman said.

They walked toward the back of the store, and pushed through the doors there, neither commenting on the fact that the doors were a commercial swinging style without a doorknob or lock.

They looked around, sighting box after box of shoes, but no sign of their friend. Now the two women were truly growing concerned. The room was dimly lit though, and the light shining from an open door at the end of the first row of shelves attracted their attention.

Slowly they made their way to the door, and peeked inside.

A figure was laying on the floor. The woman was bound and gagged, her arms and legs tied together with duct tape.

She looked frightened.

The second woman leaned over, gripped the tape covering the woman's face and conveyed a silent apology. The bound woman nodded, and the second woman ripped the tape off in one swift motion.

The woman screamed out as the tape was removed.

"OUCH!"

"Kikyo, we were so worried. Are you okay, what happened?"

"Soryu!" the still bound woman explained, holding up her hands so her friends could take the tape off of her.

The two other women glanced at each other, and then back down at their friend.

"So what are you going to do?" the first woman asked.

"Well after you untie me, I'm gonna go home, shower, and go to sleep," Kikyo explained.

"Don't you want to report this?"

"Are you kidding? This was Asuka Langley Soryu. The EVA pilot. Nothing I say will make any difference. Besides, you both know what happened between Ikari and I. Soryu told me this was her way of thanking me for 'taking care of her boyfriend.' I don't want anything more to do with either of them."

Ja Ne.

Disclaimer: Neon Genesis Evangelion is Owned by Gainax. Buy the DVD's of the Series and the Movies from them. I did, and it was worth every dime. I don't own anything except my DVD's, and this is done for my own satisfaction.

Welcome to Season Three of Neon Genesis Evangelion: The Last Best Hope. The events chronicled here take place after the 1st season of the TV series, and the End of Evangelion Movie, as well as the events that took place in "Neon Genesis Evangelion: The Awakening." The 24 part second season fic.

Episode 3:05 The Quest Begins

Presumed date is June 27th, 2019

Asuka lay within the warm embrace of Shinji's arms, snuggled under the covers of his large bed. Gradually, she became aware of the dawn light peaking through the bedroom windows. Rising quietly, she slipped from the bed, and hopped into the shower for a quick rinse. She was luxuriating in the warmth of the water when she felt a pair of strong arms encircle her.

"Morning," Shinji said into her ear, hugging her to him.

"None of that now," she scolded, peeling his hands from where they'd come to rest. "You know that we have to be at the base in a few hours for the conference with Doctor Akagi."

"Ritsuko's back one day, and she's already running my life," Shinji complained.

"No, that's my job," Asuka said, stepping out of the shower. She grabbed a towel off the rack, and began to dry herself. "Now come on, lets get going."

"No, I'm not getting out. You come back in," Shinji said with a leer.

Asuka gave Shinji a sultry smile, and shook her head.

"Nope, we need to go, and I want you to cook me a good breakfast," Asuka said.

Shinji was preparing to protest yet again when Asuka reached into the shower, and turned off the hot water. Ice cold water instantly came flooding out of the shower head, and Shinji screamed, and jumped out. A towel hit him in the face.

"Hey," he protested.

"Dry yourself off, before you come down," Asuka called as she exited the bathroom, her towel wrapped around her head.

###

Shinji entered the conference room, still holding Asuka's hand. Misato and Ryouji smiled at them, happy to see the young couple. Ritsuko was also here, with her assistant Maya, and the two of them had several folders sitting piled up between them. Kensuke and Toji entered the conference room, followed closely by the remainder of the Cherubim Pilots.

"Ah, good, now that you're all here, we can get this meeting underway," Ritsuko said.

Maya stood and handed each pilot, as well as Misato and Ryouji one of her folders. She then seated herself next to Ritsuko, who activated her laptop, along with the main display in the room.

"If you'll look at the files we've handed out, you'll see that we have a complete inventory of all the equipment that's located in Germany. The second group of items you'll see listed are the items that we removed from Germany and had shipped back here. You'll notice that there are several Progressive Knives, Progressive Swords, and Progressive Lances in the mix, as well as a fair number of Positron Weapons, including Pistols, Rifles, and Gatlings, like the one Asuka has," Ritsuko said, nodding to the red-headed pilot.

"While we believe all these weapons will be much more effective against the Legionnaires than the swords and knives we've been using so far, the most effective weapons are still the Lances," Ritsuko advanced the display to show the Lance of Longinus, and the Pseudo-Lance that had been recovered.

"In an effort to recover the remaining Pseudo-Lances, we've downloaded Satellite data from Berlin in an effort to locate them. We believe that the remainder of the Lances are at these locations," she said, and several red dots lit up around Japan.

"What do you think Shinji?" Misato asked.

"I suggest we plan eight individual recovery operations. One for each Lance. Somehow I don't think that we're going to have a free ride; once the Legionnaires realized what we're up to, they're sure to interfere," Shinji said.

"Alright, so which one do you want to go for first?" Misato asked.

"This one," Shinji said, pointing to the red dot near Shizuoka-2, that was almost on top of the very beach that most of the Nagoya-2 citizens had Awakened on.

"Let's do it," Asuka said, standing up, and placing her fists on her hips. The others were immediately reminded of this pseudo-heroic pose that Asuka had often adopted when she was younger.

Shinji snickered silently to himself. Asuka turned to glare at him, and Shinji immediately wiped the slight smile from his face. Asuka rolled her eyes, and stormed out of the room, Shinji following close behind.

"Nice to know some things haven't changed," Ryouji said to Misato, who grinned back at him.

###

Deep within the base, inside the Cherubim Launch Bay, Shinji was hurrying to catch up with Asuka.

"It's not like that Asuka," he was trying to explain. "It's just been so long, that seeing you this way is a pleasant surprise."

"I'm sure it is, Shinji," she said, sarcastically. "please, tell me how else I can amuse you."

"Well there is that thing..."

Asuka stopped, and clenched her fist, fury oozed off of her like a wave.

Taking a hint, Shinji decided he'd taken this as far as he could, and reached out to hold her in his arms.

"I love you."

Asuka relaxed into his arms, "Really?"

"Yes."

She turned in his embrace and kissed him, her pique instantly forgotten.

"Hey, you two, we've got a job to do," Kensuke said, coming into the bay with Toji and the other Pilots.

Asuka and Shinji broke apart, and bonded with their Evangelions. Moments later the Cherubim pilots had bonded with their units, and all nine giants stood ready to go.

"All right, lets move out," Shinji ordered.

"Roger," the others replied.

All kidding aside, the others acknowledged Shinji's combat and leadership skills, and quickly moved to carry out his orders. They moved to the Launch Cages, and soon, all nine units were on the surface.

"Misato, any sign of Legionnaire activity?"

"Nothing yet. The Magi are continuing to scan for spikes in local AT fields, that might indicate a Legionnaire appearance. So far nothing."

"Well keep scanning. I don't think that recovering any of these Lance's is going to be easy. As soon as they figure out what we're up to, they'll move to stop us."

"Agreed. Good luck."

"Thanks Misato. All right people, lets move it. Asuka and I will take point, Kensuke, I want you're squad to take the right flank, Toji, I want you're squad to cover our left flank."

"Roger that."

They walked for quite some time, their giant strides chewing up the distance between Nagoya-2 and Shizuoka-2. Within two hours they'd come within sight of the beach.

"Misato, we're at the beach. Can Ritsuko pinpoint the Lance any more precisely?"

"Ritsuko here Shinji. No, unfortunately that's about as precise as I can be. We know it fell in the bay, though. Looks like you're gonna have to search for it. Currents in that area haven't settled since Third Impact, so they tend to eddy and swirl. There's no telling where the Lance may have ended up."

Shinji sighed.

"Alright Ritsuko, thanks. We'll proceed into the bay, and continue our search there."

"Roger Shinji," Misato said, "be careful, the LCL is still so thick that you're visibility will be severely limited."

"Roger that," Shinji said, motioning Asuka and the others to follow him into the bay.

Across most of the bay, the ocean only came up to their waists, but soon they were beginning to enter deeper water. Finally all the units were totally submerged within the red waters of the Ocean.

"Keep in contact, everyone, and spread out. Its so murky here, that we're going to be down to a crawl," Shinji said.

"Is anyone else completely blind?" came Toji's voice.

"Yo."

"Yup."

"Yeah."

"Me too."

After everyone had chimed in that they were all unable to see anything, Shinji shook his head.

"Okay, take it dead slow, and feel around. That Pseudo-Lance should be here somewhere," Shinji said.

After a couple minutes of crawling around in the muck, Shinji felt a swat on his EVA's rear end.

"Asuka..." he tried to sound mildly annoyed.

"Yes?"

"Stop that."

"Stop what?" Asuka asked.

Suddenly his right arm was yanked out from under him. He overbalanced, slammed into the seabed, and rolled over onto his back.

"Quit horsing around."

"Shinji, what are you talking about?" Asuka asked.

Suddenly, there was a dark shape looming close over Shinji. A vaguely ape-like face, dominated by a large sharp toothed beak, and covered in yellowish green scales became visible through the gloom.

"What the?" Shinji shouted, trying to back away from the thing, but he was trapped in its grip and unable to move.

"Shinji, Pattern Blue, Energy Spike right on top of you," Misato said over the comm.

The thing snapped down at him with its beak, and Shinji felt a stab of pain in his left shoulder.

unf "Thanks for the timely warning Misato," Shinji shouted back, as he tried to get to the Lance of Longinus on his back.

"Shinji what is it? Where are you?" Asuka asked, worried.

"Over here, somewhere, there's some kind of huge monster here." *unf* The thing bit Shinji again. "Ow."

If only he could get some leverage.

Shinji tried to get his feet under him, but the thing was tremendously strong, and kept swinging him around onto his back every time he moved. Whatever it was, it was obviously better underwater than he was.

Shinji felt a stabbing pain in his chest, and looked down. His EVA armor had been shredded over his Core, and the thing was stabbing at him with its long claws. There was also some kind of constriction around his waist, but he couldn't see what was causing that.

"Crap, where's the Prog knife when I need it," he said, trying to bat the things hands away. He'd neglected to get a new Prog knife

from Doctor Akagi when they'd been passing out the weapons from Germany. He wasn't sure where the EVA's original Prog knife had gone, but he could sure use it now.

He made a grab for the Lance stored on his back again, and the thing swatted his arm away yet again.

"Shinji, what's going on, we can't see anything?" Asuka was on the edge of panic now.

"This things trying to get my Core, and I can't reach the Lance."

"Hold on, we're coming," Asuka was organizing the others in an attempt to search for Shinji, but in the red waters, where visibility was hazy at best, they weren't going to locate Shinji easily.

'If only I could open my wings,' he thought, 'I could lift us out of the sea, and into the air, where we'd finish this. But I need to concentrate to do that, and this thing's not going to give me that kind of time.'

Shinji felt a burning pain in his chest, as the thing got a dagger-like nail under his Core, and started to pry.

Shinji batted the things clawed hand away, and managed to get a foot under him. He shoved off, and finally managed to at least get upright, dragging the thing with him. He squatted then, and pushed off, breaching the surface of the ocean, and sailing several hundred feet into the air.

Clear of the water, he finally got a good look at his opponent. Covered in yellowish green scales covered the things entire body, hands, arms, legs, chest, face, but not he back. On its back was some kind of turtle shell. The thing had hollow yellowed eyes, and red pupils, full of undisguised malice. The hollow on top of its head, and the scraggly hair around the skull suddenly registered in Shinji's mind.

"Kapa, dear god, its a Kapa," Shinji said, realizing what it was he faced.

No Kapa from Japanese Mythology, however, had ever grown this big. Maybe there was some truth to the old legends after all. That didn't seem very encouraging to Shinji at the moment, though.

The Kapa was wrapped around him, using its clawed legs to hold itself to him, as it continued to claw at his chest.

"Shinji, tip its head up, dump the fluid from the depression in its head, that should weaken it," he heard Kensuke say.

"What?" he said, as they submerged again, and Shinji gathered himself to jump again.

"The legends say that if the fluid in the Kapa's head is spilled it grows weak," Kensuke said.

"Okay," Shinji said, touching the surface of the ocean, and surging back to the surface again. This time when they broke the surface of the ocean, Shinji shoved both his hands under the things chin, and pushed the things head back. The fluid in the depression poured out into the ocean, and the Kapa's grip immediately weakened. Shinji was able to punch and push himself free of the thing, but it fell back into the water, and was lost from sight instantly.

"Everyone out of the water," Shinji ordered. He didn't know how fast this thing could move, but he knew it was better in the water than the Cherub's and the EVA's were. He began jumping and bounding off the ocean floor, and slowly made his way towards the shoreline. He could see the others doing much the same thing, spread out across the bay around him, and caught sight of Asuka and Toji as they surfaced not far away.

'Oh the heck with this,' he thought to himself, and began to concentrate his energy in order to extend his wings.

Just as he felt the energy spike, and his wings start to sprout, a stabbing pain erupted in the center of his back, and he was lifted into the air.

"AAAAaaaaa," he screamed in agony as something tore into his back, hurting him more than he could remember being hurt in a very long time.

"Shinji, Shinji, oh god, its got the Lance," Asuka screamed, as she surfaced, and witnessed what had happened.

For a moment, Shinji thought that the Kapa must have grabbed the Lance of Longinus from him during the battle, and was now using it against him. Then he realized that the Original Lance was still sheathed at his back. The Kapa must be using the Pseudo-Lance they'd come looking for.

Shinji fell back into the water, still impaled on the Lance, as the Kapa tried to drive him into the seabed. Pain screamed through him, and he roared, suddenly feeling the Pseudo-Lance penetrate completely through his torso, until it came up against his Core from the back side.

Finally the thing made a noise.

"You're MINE Ikari," it roared in a watery, high pitched voice.

"Shinji NO!" he heard Asuka scream.

Suddenly the water around him vanished, and the seabed crumpled. He felt a tremendous weight crash down on him, and heard a squeal from the thing.

He turned his head, and could see Asuka, hovering them above them, her wings fully extended. Her AT field must have pushed the ocean back, and was even now, keeping the Kapa from continuing its attack, and driving the Lance home.

Asuka raised her TPG and fired.

The Kapa squealed again, and Shinji could feel the heat from the gun bleeding off as it sliced through the creature. Asuka's blast severed the things arm, and Shinji felt the pressure on the Pseudo-Lance suddenly release. He tried to roll out from under the thing, as Asuka continued her attack, but as he came over on his side, the Lance caught against the seabed, and he was unable to complete the turn.

He tried to reach up behind him, his fingers scrabbling at the blade piecing him, and finally got a grip. Yanking with all his strength he managed to remove the blade from his back, and finished his roll. He could see Asuka in the sky, her AT field still keeping the sea at bay, her TPG working across the giant Kapa's body as it boiled away the things skin. Shinji looked back at the Kapa, and could see the depression in its head quite clearly. There was a small, darkly glowing S2 Unit inside the depression.

Shinji swung the Pseudo-Lance with all his strength, and the things skull and the S2 Unit shattered under the tremendous blow. The S2 Unit exploded, and the shock wave blasted Asuka from the sky and pushed the water out, away from them, like a meteor impact in some Science Fiction movie.

Shinji, rolled to his feet, slowly, and Asuka stood up, and walked over too him.

He tried to lay a reassuring hand on her shoulder, but the effort proved too much for him, and he passed out at her feet.

###

Shinji came to himself on the beach, still inside the EVA. He tried to sit up, but felt a pressure on his shoulder.

"Lay still Shinji, you're hurt pretty badly," Asuka was saying.

"How long was I out?"

"The better part of an hour," Kensuke answered.

"We got it, didn't we?"

"What, the Legionnaire, or the Lance?" Toji asked.

"Both."

"Yeah, we got 'em both," Kensuke said, leaning on the Pseudo-Lance that Shinji had taken from the Kapa.

"Good. When can I get up?" Shinji asked.

"You need to heal up you're wounds before you try moving any more," Asuka said.

"Okay," Shinji said, and tried to focus his AT field to heal his wounds. It seemed to take hours, but he knew it was really only a few moments before his AT field flared, and healed him completely.

"Neat trick, if you can manage it," Kensuke said.

"Yeah, but you don't want to pay the price Asuka and I did to be able to do it."

"I guess not," Kensuke shrugged.

Asuka stood up, and reached down for Shinji's hand. He took it, and she drug him up to his feet.

"Okay, I think we've had enough excitement for one day. What say you, we go home?" Shinji said.

"That is the best idea I've heard all day," Asuka said, pushing Shinji in the direction of the base.

"Everything alright Shinji?" came Misato's voice.

"Yeah, we're alright Misato. We're on our way back now."

"Alright then, I'll be looking forward to this debriefing when you get here. NERV out."

Shinji turned to look at Asuka as they strode back to the base.

"Ah, the joy of paperwork."

"Yeah, well, I think I'm going to have Ritsuko look you over when we get back, and I'll deal with Misato."

"Sounds like a plan," Shinji said.

"Yeah, but I have ulterior motives," she said.

"Like what?"

"Like, while I'm dealing with all this, you go home and relax, and do whatever Ritsuko tells you to. You need to rest after this."

"Alright, alright, whatever you say."

Asuka grabbed Shinji's hand and held it all the way back to base.

###

Misato and Ryouji entered Ritsuko's lab, and were greeted by the Doctor and Maya. She motioned for the two of them to sit down, and finished up the last entry on her computer before closing the file, and shutting down.

"What was so important that you had to pull us in here so late?" Misato asked.

"While we were in Berlin, I had a chance to scan the Cherubs with more advanced equipment than we have here. I wanted to discuss this with you before I informed Shinji and his teammates."

"What's wrong?" Misato asked, a sense of dread coming over her.

"I'm not sure anything is wrong. Yet. It seems that the Cherubims DNA is drifting."

"Drifting?" Ryouji asked.

"Yes. They were all originally exact genetic copies of Shinji's Unit-01, but they had small changes take place in their genetic structure as they grew. It seems that some more subtle changes have occurred since they were bonded to their pilots. The longer a pilot is bonded to his Cherubim, the more changes have occurred."

"What sort of changes?"

"There is a small portion of every chain of DNA that seems to contain no data, and has no effect on the parent organism. We've never been sure what this was coded for in living beings, and we understand it even less in the EVA's. It is this portion of the DNA in the Cherubim that is changing," Ritsuko explained.

"How?"

"The blank DNA of the individual Cherubim is slowly changing, beginning to mirror the normal DNA patterns of their pilots. The rate of progression is subtle, but it is occurring. At the current rate, within three years, most of the current Cherubims will have converted fifty percent of their blank DNA to that of their Pilots."

"What does this mean for our Pilots?" Misato asked.

"I don't know, Misato. And that's what's got me worried. We have no idea how this sort of DNA mirroring is going to affect the Cherubim and their Pilots."

"Who're the most advanced cases," Misato asked.

"Aida and Suzuhara. I had samples of their Cherubs sent to Germany to confirm it. Aida's Cherub will reach the fifty percent threshold within the next four months, if the data is to be believed. Suzuhara's will not reach that level for more than a year. That's why I wanted to talk to you. I'm not sure we should worry the Pilots unnecessarily, after all, there may be nothing to worry about. I also want to conduct some covert tests on the Pilots themselves, to see if anything else may be going on that we're not yet aware of."

"Sorry, Ritsuko, but that's the way the OLD NERV operated. We aren't like that anymore. Shinji and the others deserve to know that

some things up. I'll schedule a briefing with him in the next few days, and we can let him know about this. We'll have to monitor the situation, and if, at any moment, it appears any of the pilots is in any kind of danger, we'll pull them from combat rotation. Agreed?"

"Agreed, Misato," Ritsuko said, looking relieved.

"In that case, I think it's time we all got to bed. I know I've had an exhausting day, and I think we could all use some downtime," Misato said.

"Alright. Goodnight Misato."

"Goodnight, Ritsuko. Maya," Misato said, standing up, and dragging Ryouji with her.

"Do you think she's doing the right thing?" Maya asked the doctor.

"I think so Maya, I just wish I didn't have this little nagging doubt about what's going on with the Cherubim. This thing with the DNA has me worried, and I don't know why."

Shaking her head, the blond scientist stood, and walked out of her office, followed by her assistant.

Next: on Episode 3:06 of Neon Genesis Evangelion

A second Pseudo-Lance has been found, and the Cherubim Pilots now have the weapons they need to stand on an equal footing with the Legionnaires, but will it be enough as they face a new enemy for control of another Lance?

It's Evangelion Episode 3:06 Dark Horizons

Disclaimer: Neon Genesis Evangelion is Owned by Gainax. Buy the DVD's of the Series and the Movies from them. I did, and it was worth every dime. I don't own anything except my DVD's, and this is done for my own satisfaction.

Welcome to Season Three of Neon Genesis Evangelion: The Last Best Hope. The events chronicled here take place after the 1st season of the TV series, and the End of Evangelion Movie, as well as the events that took place in "Neon Genesis Evangelion: The Awakening." The 24 part second season fic.

Episode 3:06 Dark Horizons

Presumed date is July 11th, 2019

##

"These Search and Destroy missions are exciting and all Shinji, but what do you think is really going on?"

"What do you mean Kensuke?" Shinji asked, as he and Asuka's Eva's and their Cherubim team started out to retrieve the next Pseudo-Lance that Doctor Akagi had identified from the reconnaissance satellites.

"Its just that... I don't know. I mean, we keep going out on missions, and now we're recovering these lances. And the whole time we're doing this, the Legionnaires keep on coming. Again and Again. But why?"

"Come on Kensuke, you've heard me tell the story often enough to understand what's happening. Its Satan's army, come to destroy us, and win the final war against the Heavenly Host."

"But it just doesn't make SENSE!" Kensuke said, vehemently. "I mean, how many of them are there, and why don't they just all attack at once, and wipe us out? One crashing blow, and we'd be finished. Why give us the chance to defeat them?"

Shinji's Eva stopped where it stood, overlooking the Sea of Japan, and turned to look at Asuka's Eva.

Asuka shrugged, "Don't look at me, I've wondered the same thing since we were fighting the original Angels."

The entire Cherubim force had come to a stop now, and stood gathered around Shinji.

"Look, I don't have all the answers. When it comes to the wherefore's and the why's of the plots we're involved in, I don't think we'll ever know what's really going on. But I do know we have a duty to perform, and that duty is to fight for the sake of the human race, and the Heavenly Host."

Shinji turned and began walking towards the distant mountain that was their destination, Asuka following.

Kensuke looked at Toji, shrugged, and followed Shinji, the remaining units bringing up the rear.

Asuka opened a private channel to Shinji, and Shinji responded, granting her a mental caress.

"Shinji, are you okay?"

"I'm sorry. It's nothing."

"Don't you take that tone with me Shinji. That's the way you were when we were kids. Back then it might have upset and distracted me, but I know now that that's how you behave when you're avoiding something. Talk to me."

"Sor... Um, okay Asuka. Look, Kensuke just hit a nerve. I've been wondering something along the same lines ever since Kim was killed. There seem to be more and more of the Legionnaires, and they're more and more powerful. None of these battles has been easy, but if any two or three groups of legionnaires I've faced had attacked at once, we'd have been finished."

"I doubt that Shinji. I've seen the fights, and I know you. You have depths of strength that you've never shown anyone, not even me."

"Thanks," he said, projecting a grin over the link.

"Anyhow," Shinji said, "it's just that I've been trying to contact those Angels I spoke to before, and I haven't had even the slightest glimmer of a contact. Before you came back to me, I tried to contact them, to try and glean more information about what they told me, and maybe to learn about what was happening to you. They never responded, at least, not anything obvious, but I ended up having a dream about how I could contact you. I did what the dream said, and it worked."

"I wondered about that. It seemed kind of far-fetched that you'd be able to figure something like that out all on your own."

"Why, cause I'm not a Genius like the Great Asuka Langley Soryu?" he teased.

"Yeah," Asuka teased back.

Shinji projected a face with its tongue stuck out at Asuka.

"Anyhow, I just keep hoping that I'll find some answers to whats happening, and instead all I really find is more questions."

"Well, I don't know, but maybe when we've found all the Lances that will give us a better idea of what we need to do. We'll at least be better equipped to defend ourselves. And there will be new Cherubs and pilots coming to aid us. "

"I hope its enough Asuka, because I worry about what'll happen if we ever run up against an enemy we can't stop."

##

Shinji stood on the lip of the Volcano, overlooking the sea of molten lava, his friends spread out around him.

"You have GOT to be kidding me," he said.

"Its the proverbial sword in the stone," Asuka said.

"That's really cool," Touji said.

"Definitely," Kensuke agreed.

The caldera of the volcano was almost a half mile across, and filled with red bubbling lava. Out near the center of the caldera, a small island of cooled lava had formed a sort of island. Jutting up out of the island at a slight angle, was the Lance they'd come in search of.

"Now what?" One of the other pilots asked.

"Now, its the job of the Lady of the Lake to retrieve the sword, and give it back to the champion," Shinji said, turning to look at Asuka.

"Screw you Ikari," Asuka said.

"Maybe later."

"Puhlease..." Touji and Kensuke groaned together.

"Okay, so you're saying that you think its MY job to go get that?" Shinji asked, pointing.

"Yup," Asuka nodded.

"But I've already gotten us out of most of the situations we've gotten ourselves into. Its someone else's turn," Shinji whined.

"Nope. This is the perfect time for you to show us just how well you can control those fancy wings of yours Ikari. Fly out there and get that Lance," Kensuke said.

"Alright, Alright. I guess I have to," he muttered, glaring at Asuka's Eva.

Shinji focused his AT field, and extended his wings. Their purple white glow, bathing the dusky smoke filled sky above the volcano.

Willing himself to rise, he began to lift from the edge of the volcano, and drift towards the island at the heart of the caldera, and the Pseudo-Lance held there. It didn't take long, and soon, Shinji was hovering over the surface of the island.

"Wow, this is hot," he complained.

"I'm sure it is, so hurry up, get the lance, and get out of there," Asuka said.

"Roger, retrieving the lance now," Shinji replied.

He reached out to grab the end of the lance, and was met with resistance.

"Guess, I'm not the King of England," he quipped.

"What was that?"

"Nothing. Just this thing seems to be stuck good," he explained.

"Try breaking up the island; it should come free," Asuka said.

Shinji set down briefly, keeping his wings extended, and stomped on the edge of the small island. It crumbled under his assault. Encouraged, Shinji continued to stomp, until he reached the center of the small island, and the lance began to move.

Down.

"Hey, its sinking," he said.

"Pull harder Shinji," Asuka said.

Shinji focused his will into lifting the lance from the surface of the island, watching as he did so the total destruction of the small island.

"What the hell's THAT?" Kensuke gasped, pointing.

"Shinji, look out, LEGIONNAIRE!" Asuka shouted.

Shinji looked down, and sure enough, something was holding on to the other end of the Lance. Something submerged within the depths of the molten rock, and seemingly at ease with the hellish heat emanating from it.

As Shinji struggled to pull the lance from the things grasp, two pairs of hands reached up from the lava to grab hold of his legs.

"SHINJI!" Asuka screamed.

Shinji felt a tremendous tug, and suddenly he was pulled beneath the surface of the Lava. His EVA Enhanced senses immediately showed him several serpentine figures swirling around him, one holding the Pseudo-Lance.

"Welcome, Ikari," said a number of voices, insinuating themselves into his mind, "We are the Salamander, stewards of the pit. We are your doom."

"Not likely," Shinji returned, kicking his feet, and breaking free of the two that held him. He had to end this fight quickly; the heat of the lava was nearly unbearable, and he could feel his skin blistering already. Soon his armor would begin to melt, and then the exposed skin beneath would burn, much like it had the last time he'd been in a volcano.

Shinji drew his own Lance, and looked around him. He was surrounded by perhaps a half dozen of these things; maybe more, hopefully less. Each one had a humanoid torso, with long claw-tipped fingers, and a serpents tail. Their heads were mostly human, but sprouted elaborate horns that would have looked more appropriate on a deer or elk. And their eyes.

Even under the lava, which glowed red all about them, Shinji could see the hellish green glow that their eyes gave off.

Without even bothering to think, Shinji struck out at the nearest Salamander, stabbing hard with the Lance of Longinus.

Only to watch it bounce off the things tough hide.

'Oh great,' he thought to himself. 'These things are just like the Angel that Asuka fought in the other Volcano. Their skin is probably super dense.'

"Oh, I assure you Ikari, that is the least of our abilities," came the voices again.

One of the Salamanders grabbed hold of each of Shinji's arms, and, as he struggled to break free of their grip, a third one swam up before him. Shinji gasped as the thing opened its mouth, revealing a mouth full of long serrated fangs. It lunged forward, and Shinji, unable to dodge, felt the teeth bite into the armor covering his chest, ripping loose a large piece, and exposing his Eva's naked flesh to the searing heat.

Shinji screamed.

Suddenly the Lava erupted next to him, and one of the Salamanders was knocked from his left arm. Not questioning his good fortune, he smashed at the one on his right arm until it released him, and the one in front backed away.

Turning to look at what had driven off the first Salamander, he was Asuka next to him, kicking the thing mercilessly.

"You alright?"

"I think I will be. Now," he said, turning his attention back to the Salamander that was still holding the Lance.

The thing smiled at him, and attacked, Lance leading the way.

Shinji dodged, deflecting the lance with his own, and brought his feet up to kick the things abdomen. The thick lava made his movements a bit slower than usual, and the thing easily dodged his kick.

Suddenly an energy beam ripped past him and hit the Salamander on top of the head, slicing off one of its horns.

It screamed.

Shinji glanced over his shoulder at Asuka.

"Hey, you never know till you try," she said, turning her back to him, and firing up the TPG again. This time one of the Salamanders circling them caught the beam square in the chest. Asuka worked the beam back and forth across its body, slicing the thing in half.

Shinji turned to face his own opponent, willing the lance to transform into its bladed form. This time when the thing attacked, Shinji deflected the blow with the blade, and then, reversed his swing, bringing the wide blade back up over the creature's blade and arms. He struck the thing's jaw, and watched as the blade continued on through the front of the face, and out the top of the skull.

It simply smiled a horrible, disconnected smile at him, and raised the lance to attack again.

But Shinji could see his target.

At the center of the thing's head, was the S2 Unit. Small, and glowing with the same eldritch green light that their eyes glowed with.

Shinji, waited until the thing attacked again, attempting to grab the lance as it was thrust at him. He missed. And the thing's lance pierced his shoulder, opposite from where the other one had bit him.

Shinji grunted as pain flashed through him.

Asuka, meanwhile, had continued her attack, and the Salamanders were learning to fear her and her weapon. Dissolving pieces of two more Salamanders were now drifting into the depths of the Volcano. Something pierced her right shoulder from behind, and she wrenched herself free. Turning, she was confronted by the sight of the nearly faceless Salamander, and Shinji, the Pseudo-Lance stabbed all the way through his shoulder, half its length emerging from his back. It had been the Lance that had poked her.

Shinji wrenched away from the Salamander violently, and the thing lost its grip on the lance.

Seeing or sensing the loss of the Lance, two more Salamanders speed up from the depths of the lava, but Asuka's quick reactions burned them down before they could get close enough to attack.

Shinji, meanwhile, was trying to wrench out the lance that was lodged in his chest. Just as it seemed he was about to succeed, the last Salamander lunged at him, twining itself about him, and grabbing at the lance.

Asuka felt helpless, she couldn't fire the TPG without hitting Shinji as well, and the heat from the Lava was beginning to melt through her Eva's tough armor.

The Salamander gave up trying to get the lance for a moment, and instead concentrated on Shinji's wings, biting and clawing at them.

Shinji wasn't too concerned about this, after all the wings were an extension of his AT field, and nearly invulnerable.

'Apparently not nearly enough,' he gasped, as the Salamander succeeded in slicing the wings off his right side with one clawed hand.

No longer able to support himself in the lava, Shinji began a slow decent into the magma chamber beneath the volcano.

As he and the Salamander descended, the thing used its shattered jaw in an attempt to bite him.

Shinji felt the teeth lock into his left shoulder, and wanted to scream. Instead, he lifted the Lance of Longinus, and used it on himself. Reversing the blade, he crashed it down into his shoulder. He was rewarded by a satisfying crunch, as the blade sank into the skull of the Salamander at the same time as it hit his own shoulder.

He turned his head a bit, and could see the blade piercing the things S2 Unit, and had just enough time to turn away before it exploded, the shock wave blasting him deeper into the magma chamber.

Shinji looked around for any other opponents, but could see nothing.

He then looked up, towards the rapidly receding surface of the volcano. He tried to shape his AT field into some sort of lifting force that would take him back to the surface, but for once, it's power seemed weak, and unfocused. After a few moments of effort, he could feel his AT field weaken so much that the remaining wings vanished from his back.

'Now what?' he wondered, looking down into the depths of the magma chamber.

Suddenly the forgotten pain of the Pseudo-Lance that was stuck in his shoulder exploded back into his reality. Gasping, he looked up, and could see Asuka, both hands wrapped around the lance, one on the piece sticking out the front, one on the point, jutting from his back.

"Hang on, I'll have us back to the surface in a minute," She said.

Shinji nodded, and tried to grab hold of one of her arms with his own, but the damage to his shoulders was apparently too great, and he felt as weak as a kitten. It seemed to take several long minutes before he and Asuka at last broke the surface.

Shinji watched as Asuka gained altitude over the caldera, and headed back to where the cherubim waited.

"Jesus," Touji muttered as she set down with Shinji, gently easing him back onto the lip of the volcano.

"Hold still Shinji, this is only going to hurt for a second," she said, and then, violently, wrenched the lance from Shinji's shoulder.

The pain was overwhelming, and Shinji, with a grunt, passed out.

##

Shinji awoke several hours later, in the comfort of his own bed, but something about it was not all that comfortable.

Feeling around in the dark, he noticed that the sheets were wet.

"What the..."

"Shh, lie back down, Shinji, you've had a long day," he heard Asuka mutter in the darkness.

"Asuka, what?"

"Shh, its okay. You're covered in minor burns, and your shoulder is dislocated. Seems that some of the damage thats inflicted on the EVA's transfers back to us when we leave them. You're covered in burn cream, and I wetted down the sheets to keep you cool."

"Oh," he mumbled. "Thanks."

"No problem."

"Hey," he asked, realizing something was still wrong, "what happened to the EVA. Last thing I remember, I was still bonded to it."

"Oh, after we got you back to the base, and had you laid out in the launch bay, you just sort of dropped out of the S2 Unit. Doctor Akagi wanted to run all kinds of tests on you to try and figure that one out, but I told her she could do that later, when you felt better."

"Ah, well, thanks I guess."

There was a long moment of silence.

"Asuka?"

"Shinji?"

"Hmm?" he could hear the question in her tone.

"Why did you do it?"

"Well, we had to recover that lance. It's alright isn't it?"

"Yes, it is, but that's not what I mean."

"I'm a little confused here Asuka, what DO you mean?"

"That first time, why did you come into the Volcano after me?"

"Oh, that. You were my teammate, I had to. It was my duty."

"No you didn't. I've talked to Misato and Ritsuko. They specifically ordered you NOT to go in after me. Of course, Misato said by the time she finished the order, you were already half way down to me."

"Well, I guess I just couldn't leave anyone to that kind of fate. I had to do it."

"Shinji, the hero," she clucked.

"Yeah, well, that's me," he sighed, trying to find a comfortable position beneath the damp bedclothes.

He felt a pair of soft lips cover his own briefly, and felt a tear splash onto his face.

"Hey, hey, what's this for?"

"For being the most wonderful person I've ever known. You did so much for me back then, and I never once thanked you for it."

"Well..." Shinji drawled, "I can think of a way you could thank me for it now."

"Oh?" Asuka replied seductively.

"Yeah. You could put on some more of that burn cream you mentioned. I'm really sore."

"Ikari..."

"Yes?"

"As soon as you're all healed up... You're dead."

##

On the Northern most tip of the island of Hong Kong, two figures awakened on a stretch of deserted beach.

One figure, a Japanese man, with a severely trimmed beard, sat up, looked surprised for a moment, and then, nodded his head.

The other, an elderly man with long grayish-white hair, turned to look at the other man.

"No," he said.

"Yes," the first man nodded.

"But we were sure. Everything we worked towards, everything we strove for. Gone."

"Not so," the bearded man said. "Look," and he pointed overhead to where the second moon hung in the sky.

"The Guff."

"Precisely."

"But if the Guff was released from its earthly bounds, why are we not a part of it."

"The first child. In the end, she rejected me, rejected our plan. She gave HIM the choice. Apparently he did NOT make the same choice we would have."

"Him? Him who? I warn you, I have no time for your games."

"Shinji. He's the only one Rei would have considered changing the scenario for," said the bearded man.

"So, Gendo, your son decided to return mankind to this dead end."

"Apparently so, Keele, apparently so."

"Well, then I think we need to see what we can do about changing that," The first chairman of Seele said, getting to his feet.

"Quite so," Gendo agreed, standing up, and dusting himself off.

The two turned to look at the Hong Kong skyline, noting its reassuring features, and realized precisely where they were.

"We should be able to get to the Hong Kong Branch in twenty or thirty minutes," Gendo said, walking in land from the beach.

"Then what, there's not likely to be any power," Keele answered, following.

"True, but the Backup Nuclear Power Plant is likely to still be operational. We'll just have to activate it."

"And then?"

"Then we find out what's been going on during our absence. We've been gone for quite some time," Gendo said, wiping the accumulated grime from the windshield of a car they were passing.

##

Next: on Episode 3:07 of Neon Genesis Evangelion

The last of the Lances has been recovered, and everything seems perfect, but something sinister is happening. In a battle that will reveal new dangers and new possibilities, a drastic change will overtake some of our heroes. But will this change be for the best, or a foreboding of problems ahead?

It's Evangelion Episode 3:07 Discoveries.

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Episode 3:07 Discoveries

Presumed date is December 11th, 2019

##

Shinji and Asuka stood looking down into the Cherubim clone chambers, and watched as the next batch of giant warriors were pulled from the LCL.

"Did you get that list of approved candidates to Ritsuko?" Asuka asked.

"Yeah, I had it finished last night, but I had to wait until this morning to give it to her," Shinji said.

"Did she ever tell you where she was?" Asuka asked with a sly grin.

"Well, it seems she was helping Lt. Ibuki with some re-decorating at her quarters."

Asuka laughed lightly at this.

"Why don't she and Maya just admit what's going on. I mean, then they could go ahead and make it formal."

"Shinji, the day you understand why Women do anything, the world is going to end," Asuka chided.

"It already DID end, and I still don't know anything," he lamented, hugging her to him.

Asuka leaned back into Shinji's embrace, smiling. The smile dropped off her face as she noticed an odd sensation. She tried to concentrate on it, but it slipped away.

"So, we're going to be welcoming a new squad of Cherubim and Pilots into the fold tomorrow," Asuka said, trying to distract herself.

"Yep, and I for one can't wait."

"Why's that?"

"Those last couple of battles were a little hairy. We're facing more and more of these Legionnaires, and at this rate, we're going to start sustaining losses again. We need the assistance."

"You're worried about failing them again, aren't you?" Asuka said, turning to hug him.

"I think about it every time we sortie. I can't help it. I keep asking myself 'What if?'"

Asuka hugged him again, knowing how his one failure still haunted him. Outnumbered, and nearly overpowered, he'd been too distracted to notice that one of his team was in trouble, and it had cost the young woman her life.

Asuka reached up to capture Shinji's face with her hands, and drew him down into a soft kiss. She could still remember when she could look down on him, and the first time she had realized that he had grown taller than her.

It had been at Misato's wedding to Ryouji, and they had been dancing. Then he'd kissed her, and she'd acted like a complete and total idiot.

"Well, you aren't the only one who makes mistakes, so don't dwell on it. Ryouji used to tell me that truly intelligent people learn from their mistakes."

"You're the smart one here, I just know how to fight," he chuckled.

"Yes, and you're very good at it, so don't forget that."

They clasped hands then, and walked from the room, looking like the young lovers that they were, despite the casual duty uniforms they were both wearing. They crossed to the lift, and began to ascend to the command center, to check in with Misato on the next day's preparations.

When the lift opened, they almost ran into Ritsuko as she and Maya Ibuki were coming the other way.

"Whoa, Doctor, you okay?" Shinji asked, looking at the expression on Ritsuko's face.

"Ah, Shinji, I was just on my way to find you. Maya and I finished running our weekly inspection of the Cherubim this morning, as well as checking the recent data gathered from the Pilot's Physicals."

"And you found something?" Shinji asked, with an ill feeling gnawing at his stomach.

"Yes. Lets go to the briefing room, and I'll explain."

Later, after the four had collected Misato and Ryouji from their places in the Command Center, Ritsuko began her lecture. It was mercifully brief.

"... and these last two graphs here show the genetic convergence that we've been monitoring within the Cherubim. As you can see here, Kensuke's Cherubim has reached 51.3% convergence, and Touji's has reached 50.7%. In addition we have noted that some microscopic portions of the pilots DNA has now begun to show signs of change as well."

"Our DNA is changing?" Asuka asked.

"Yes. The odd thing is, it's a portion of the DNA that has long been considered empty of information. In the RNA of a cell are large blocks of data that have long been thought to be empty, or useless. Most likely a holdover from ancient times, or a precursor of things to come. It is into this space that new data is being written. We almost missed the changes."

"Any idea what this means for them Doctor Akagi?" Shinji asked.

"No, but we've been monitoring some odd energy fluctuations from both Kensuke's and Touji's Cherubim in the last two battles."

"What kind of energy?"

"We don't know. It's so faint, that we at first thought we were seeing some sort of background radiation, or a minor glitch in the readings. But the readings are persistent."

"Does this constitute a threat to the pilots?" Misato asked.

"Honestly Misato, I have no idea. We just don't know enough about this phenomenon yet to say much more than that we've detected it."

"Okay, well we'll keep an eye on Touji and Kensuke the next time we sortie, and I'd like you to install some more monitoring equipment on their Cherubim," Shinji said.

"Alright," Ritsuko said, nodding to Maya, who had been taking notes on her laptop.

"Now, then, Misato, about tomorrow's Bonding Ceremony..."

A sudden buzzing from six cell phones stopped the meeting.

"Yes," Misato said, activating the main screen to the control room.

"We have a Contact, Commander," Hyuga said.

"Pattern?"

"Unknown."

"What?" Misato asked, and turned to look at Ritsuko, who was typing away at her ever present laptop.

"Confirmed, Misato, we have an unknown pattern located offshore, moving parallel to the coastline. I don't know what it is, but it has a massive energy reading."

Shinji and Asuka launched themselves toward the bay where their EVA's slept.

##

"Evangelion's Launch!" Misato shouted.

Within the depths of the NERV base at Nagoya-2 two launch catapults threw the giant biomechanical behemoths skyward. Moments later the Amethyst and Crimson giants were thrown free of the underground base, and extended their AT fields, and their wings.

"Can you guide us in Misato?" Shinji asked.

"Can't you feel it Shinji? There's a huge pressure-wave of some sort coming from the east south-east," Asuka said, pointing a giant armored hand in that direction.

"Confirmed Shinji, that's the location of the target," Misato said.

"Any word from Ritsuko as to what it might be?" Shinji asked.

"Nothing. She and Maya are running simulations through the Magi as fast as they can, but so far they haven't come up with any matches."

"Okay, we'll go ahead and see what we can find. Have the Cherubim launch and maintain guard positions on the coast," Shinji said.

"Alright Shinji," Misato said.

It took nearly ten minutes for Shinji and Asuka to put themselves into visual contact with the target. When they finally did see it, bad

memories, over four years old, came to the surface.

"Gaghiel," Shinji whispered.

"What was that?" Ritsuko asked, looking up at the screen.

"Its huge Ritsuko. It resembles the first Angel Asuka and I fought together. It took both of us inside of Unit 02 to defeat Gaghiel, and this things even bigger. Maybe ten or twelve times larger than Gaghiel was."

"What's it doing?" Misato asked.

"Nothing, its just swimming. I can't tell how deep it is, because of the size, but its outlines aren't too crisp, so I'd guess its between forty and fifty meters of depth."

"Keep watching it, but don't move in on it for now. Just monitor it."

"We copy Ritsuko," Asuka said, motioning Shinji to follow her, as she maneuvered to follow the giant entity.

Asuka and Shinji continued to follow the huge creature for some time, and Asuka began to notice something odd.

"Misato, can your screens see the wake of this thing?"

"Yes, we have full screen resolution from your external camera's. Why?"

"Look at the LCL behind it. Am I crazy or is it... changing?"

"Hang on Asuka, we're checking on it now."

Asuka glanced to her left, and saw Shinji's Evangelion return her questioning gaze.

"Roger Asuka, we're picking up a change in the LCL Sea in the creatures wake," Ritsuko said.

"What's happening?"

"The LCL in the wake of the creature is weaker. Almost as if it's diluted. Can you take a sample for me? I know you don't have a container, so just swallow some. I can pump the Eva's stomach later."

Asuka flinched at that thought, she just hoped she wouldn't be inhabiting the Eva when Ritsuko tried it.

"Roger, I'll sweep down, and swallow some. Shinji, keep an eye on that thing for me," Asuka said, as she dropped down to sea level.

Asuka opened her Eva's mouth, and took a big mouthful of LCL in.

And spit it back out.

"What the hell?"

"Asuka, what's wrong?" Shinji asked, pulling up, and looking down at his partners shuddering form.

"There's something in the water alright."

"What?"

"Look," Asuka said, scooping up an Eva sized handful of water teeming with sea life. Fish, squid, and other small sea creatures were swimming about in the crimson colored liquid.

"Ritsuko do you see this?" Asuka asked.

"I see it Asuka, hold on a moment," the scientist said. Several frantic moments of tapping on her keyboard commenced.

"I think I have a possible name for our bogey guys," Ritsuko said finally.

"Well?"

"Leviathan. According to some translations of ancient texts, Leviathan was a beast created by God, and from which all sea-life sprang," Ritsuko explained.

"Okay, so, if this thing is this Leviathan, then its here to bring life back to the ocean?"

"That would apparently be the case. At least if this is THAT Leviathan."

"There are other Leviathan's?" Shinji asked.

"Yes, several actually."

"What's the worst it could be?" Shinji asked, immediately sorry he did.

"Well, in some texts Leviathan was one of the four beasts or Princes of Evil who would help bring about the Apocalypse."

"Didn't we already go through one of those?" Shinji asked.

Asuka almost laughed.

"Well, I managed to get the more squiggly animals out of it, and swallowed some of this stuff, Ritsuko."

"Okay. Meanwhile, I don't think this thing is an immediate threat, so you two can return to base."

"Alright," Shinji said, motioning Asuka to come up to his flight level, "we're returning to the base."

Asuka came up to Shinji and the two returned to the base, passing over the Cherubim force as it was returning from the sea.

"Hey guys," Shinji said, as they landed.

"Hey Shinji," Touji said, waving.

"So no big threat, at least so far?" Kensuke asked.

"Apparently, nothing to worry about. At least for now," Shinji said, as Asuka descended into the base.

Shinji and the Cherubim lined up, and descended into the base, coming into the Cherubim launch bay. Shinji materialized before his kneeling Eva in a flash of light, and walked over to Asuka, who was standing next to Maya Ibuki. Both were observing Dr. Akagi as she inserted a probe into Asuka's Eva and siphoned out some liquid.

"I should have the preliminary results from this back later today," Akagi said, leaving the pilots alone in the great hangar.

"Thanks Ritsuko. Okay gang, lets get cleaned up. We have a ceremony to prepare for, tomorrow, and we should all be presentable," Shinji said, motioning the other pilots towards the locker room.

Asuka turned her head, as if listening to something.

"Asuka?"

"Yeah, Shinji, I'm coming, I just..."

"Yes?"

"I don't know. Something weird. I noticed it earlier today, but its as if there's a growing sense of dread. Like someone walked on my grave."

Shinji tried to extend his senses to see if he could feel whatever it was that was disturbing Asuka. Something was there, he could feel it too, now that he looked for it, but it was elusive, slippery, and every time he thought he had it, it slipped out of reach.

"Hmm, I see what you mean. Let's get cleaned up, and spend some time alone."

"Shinji," Asuka smiled, looking at him out the corner of her eyes.

Shinji blushed.

"That is NOT what I mean Asuka."

Asuka laughed, "I know. Come on, lets get cleaned up."

Taking Shinji's hand, she led him to the Locker Room.

##

Shinji and Asuka stood with the six new Cherubim pilots, and the remainder of the old Cherubim pilots who were stationed in Japan after the ceremony that had welcomed them into the elite pilot ranks.

"So then Touji said 'It's overpriced. But that's okay, here's your change,' and he dropped his pants."

Asuka moaned lightly and glanced over to Shinji, "Remind me to kill Kensuke when we're done here."

"You know he loves to tell that story," Shinji said, smirking at Asuka.

Suddenly Shinji felt that same twinge at the edge of his awareness that had been bugging him since the day before.

"You feel that too?" Asuka asked.

"Yeah. I don't know, but somehow it feels ... familiar."

"I know what you mean, if we could just isolate it."

"Hey, Touji," Shinji called.

"Yeah?"

"Keep an eye on things here, Asuka and I are going to check something out."

"Well hurry back, okay. I'm not feeling so hot," Touji said.

"Sick?" Shinji asked.

"Not really, just ... I can't describe it. I feel ... odd."

"Well, as soon as we get back, you should probably go see Doctor Akagi."

"Good idea."

Shinji took Asuka by the arm, and led her out to the area where the lifts were.

"Well? Up or down?"

Asuka concentrated for a while, trying to pinpoint the disturbance.

"Down, I think."

Shinji called for the lift to take them deeper into the base. While he waited, he called Ritsuko.

"How's the party going Shinji?"

"Its going well. Asuka and I are on a scavenger hunt though. Are the Magi picking up anything weird?"

"No. We're still monitoring that Leviathan from yesterday, but its still out at sea. Its closing in on the southern Phillipine Islands."

"That's quite some distance to travel in so short a time, even for something that size."

"Agreed."

"But nothing else?"

"No. Do you want me to run a detailed scan?"

"Yeah. Asuka and I are both sensing something odd. We can't pinpoint it yet, but we'll tell you when we have something more."

Shinji closed the connection as the lift arrived, and entered it with Asuka.

"How far down should we go?" he asked.

"All the way. We'll start at the bottom, and work our way up," Asuka said.

Minutes later the lift opened on the bottom most level of the Nagoya-2 base.

"Hmm, definitely stronger here," Asuka said.

"Yes, but what could be causing it?"

"This way," Asuka said, pointing into the chamber where the Cherubim were created.

Once within, Shinji agreed with Asuka, that the source of the disturbance was here. Shinji looked around, then closed his eyes and concentrated.

"Back there," he said, pointing to the rear of the titanic chamber.

"Yes, you're right," Asuka said.

Together the pair walked down the chamber to the rear of the gigantic room. As one, they turned to the right, and down the sole chamber at the rear of this room. Off of this chamber were a series of monstrous alcoves, the last two in the line were sealed by giant capstones.

"No, oh no." Asuka said, as the feeling spiked.

"Which chamber is it coming from?" Shinji asked with a dawning sense of dread.

"Both of them."

An explosion blew the capstones off both the chambers.

##

"ENERGY SPIKE!" Hyuga said, just as a tremor rocked the control room.

"PATTERN BLUE! ANGEL CONFIRMED!"

"WHERE?" Misato shouted into the din of clanging alarms.

"IT'S INSIDE THE BASE!"

"WHAT?!"

"LOCATION LOCKED! CHERUBIM LEVEL! INTERNMENT CHAMBER!"

"Oh my God! Shinji and Asuka were going down there when I last spoke to them!"

"Scramble the Cherubim, get them down there!" Misato shouted.

##

"What happened," Asuka muttered, sitting up grogily, and looking around.

To her left the shattered openings of the two sealed chambers were dark and smoking. To her right, the two gigantic capstones that had sealed both the chambers lay blasted and shattered.

It was what she saw in front of her that concerned her most, however.

Shinji hovered in the air, probably sixty feet off the ground, a nimbus of power surrounding him. He looked almost as if he were being crucified again, arms outstretched, and energy radiating from his body in the form of a giant cross. Asuka could sense the power he was putting out with her own AT field, and was staggered. How long could he keep that up? How long, had he, could he, hold the

thing before them at bay.

"Asuka!" he shouted.

"Yes, Shinji!" She shouted back.

"Get out of here! Get the Cherubim down here! Get your EVA!" he grunted out.

"I can't leave you to face this thing alone!" she shouted.

"Yes you can! If you don't, the base is going to be lost! If this thing gets loose, it's all over for us!"

"But I..."

"ASUKA GO!" he screamed.

"Alright," she cried, running back to the lift, turning her back on her lover.

'That's right Ikari, send your plaything away. You know you can't stop me, the best you can do is slow me down.'

'Stop using her voice!' Shinji thought at the perverted Cherubim before him.

'Why? Did you care for this one? Can you feel the echo of her soul within the body? I can.'

"SHUT UP!" Shinji shouted, and his AT field surged, pushing back the thing trying to crawl out of the tomb.

Shinji felt his energy start to ebb, and realized he was expending energy too fast. At this rate he had mere moments until his AT field was penetrated.

'Ah, you feel it don't you Ikari. Your end is approaching. And I, who am the symbol of your greatest loss, will become the instrument of your demise.'

Shinji began to think this thing might be right.

##

Kensuke and Touji led the Cherubim squad into the depths of the base, and down to the birthing chamber.

"Where are they?" Touji asked.

"I don't see anything, but I... I feel something... over that way," Kensuke pointed with one titantic Cherubim hand.

"You feel something?" one of the other pilots asked.

"Yeah, I can't describe it, but I feel something too," Touji said.

"Weapons at the ready, everyone, lets go," Kensuke said, and ten giants moved down the end of the passageway.

"Whoa!" Touji gasped, as he turned the corner.

There suspended in the air, held aloft on the discharge from his AT field was Shinji Ikari.

And in front of him was something Touji had seen in his nightmares.

The golden Cherubim armor of their fallen fellow pilot, Kim Keller. But it had become corrupted. A massive Core was attached to the back of it, and a giant green wormlike creature was bonded to it like some sort of second spine. Massive green tentacles sprouted all over the thing, and snaked to every part of the Cherubim. Several more tentacles were pounding away at Shinji's AT field; orange hexagons sparking every time a hit got close.

"Oh shit!" Kensuke said.

Shinji turned to look at his friends.

"Nice of you guys to finally show up," he said, as a tentacle penetrated his AT field and smashed him to the floor.

"SHINJI!!" the entire Cherubim team shouted, and threw themselves into the battle.

Touji and Kensuke sliced at the Gold Cherubim with their Lances, and tried to drive it back. Their Lances bounced almost harmlessly off the things AT field, and smashed the floor.

"Someone get Shinji out of here!" Touji said, grunting as he blocked the Legionaire's left arm and two tentacles.

One of the newer Cherubim pilots stooped and grabbed the unconscious pilot, and moved back to the elevators.

"Now that Shinji's safe, lets kill this thing," Kensuke said.

"Agreed," Touji shouted, "Cherubim attack!"

##

Asuka arrived in the Cherubim Hangar, and sprinted towards her Evangelion. Her and Shinji's Eva's were the only units here. That must mean Misato had already dispatched the Cherubim.

'Good, Shinji won't be alone,' she thought, as she reached for the Eva, and felt her AT field contact the Core.

Her awareness snapped, and she was suddenly rising from her crouched position. She grabbed the Lance of Longinus from Shinji's still immobile Unit 01, and headed for the elevators.

"Asuka, thank god, what's happening?" Misato said.

"Shinji's in the tombs! There's a Legionaire there, and its taken possession of the dead Cherubim! Open the shaft!"

"We're opening the doors now, stand by. Stand by. We have a Cherubim ascending Asuka, watch out! He's got Shinji!"

"Shinji?" Asuka felt herself choke on the name.

Suddenly a blue and black Cherubim was there, one hand holding the lift line, the other curled protectively around an unmoving form.

"SHINJI!!" Asuka screamed, and the chamber shook with the force of her Evangelion's echoed shout.

"He's unconscious Ma'am," the Cherubim pilot reported, "How he held that thing off for as long as he did is a miracle."

"Give him to me," Asuka said, holding out her hand.

"No ma'am, Doctor Akagi said I'm to give him to the paramedics," the pilot said.

"Asuka, they need you down there, you're the squad leader now, they need you to take charge," Misato called.

Asuka was torn between her desire to see to Shinji's well being, and the knowledge that even now the Cherubim below were engaged in a pitched battle.

"Alright Misato, see that he's taken care of," She said, leaping down the access way to the Cherubim birthing chamber.

##

Deep within the tomb the Cherubim, despite having half of the Seele created Lances, were not doing well.

"BLOODY HELL!" Kensuke shouted as two tentacles slammed him up against the wall next to another Cherubim.

"What's it take to kill this thing?" Touji asked, hacking away at a nearby tentacle.

"ME!" Asuka shouted as she rounded the corner, Lance of Longinus held high.

Asuka struck hard.

And watched in awe as her strike was deflected off the strongest AT field she'd ever seen.

"What the hell?"

"Yeah, no shit," Touji said, hacking at another tentacle that was close to him.

"What the fuck is this?"

"I'm not sure, but if I had to guess that Core we recovered from that Legionnaire we killed at Matsushiro somehow regenerated and took over Keller's Cherubim. It... merged itself with the Cherubim Core, and because of that, its insanely powerful," Kensuke explained as much as he had guessed about their foe in the few minutes they'd been fighting it.

Asuka drew the Lance back, and willed it to transform into a blade. She then hacked at the nearest tentacle, and was satisfied to see the long green appendage sliced cleanly off. She was less satisfied to see the remainder of the tentacle split itself lengthwise, thicken, and grow into two full sized tentacles.

"Great, its mutated into a Hydra Hentai Tentacle Monster," Asuka muttered.

"I never read a doujin about something like this," Kensuke grunted, as he struck out with his Lance blade.

"Hacking at these tentacles is getting us nowhere. We need to destroy the Core." Touji said.

"I'll try to neutralize its AT field. When I do, you strike," Asuka ordered.

"Roger,"

Asuka struck, parried, struck, parried, and parried again, then she threw everything she had into her AT field, and tried to open a way for the Cherubim to strike.

It wasn't enough. Touji and Kensuke's blades bounced harmlessly off the AT field, just short of the things Core.

'It won't be that easy Soryu. Ikari has fallen, and soon, you will too. There is nothing that can...!' the thing stopped speaking suddenly and turned to look sharply to its left. Four tentacles shot out towards Touji, trying to spear him.

They never reached him.

Instead orange hexagonal shapes of light appeared between the Cherubim and the Legionnaire.

Touji was as shocked as anyone.

"What the hell?"

"It's an AT field. Touji, you have an AT field," Kensuke was nearly shouting in excitement. "Focus it on the Legionnaire, help Asuka take the AT field down."

"Yeah, right, like I know how to do that."

"You were an EVA pilot, you should know how to do this," Kensuke said.

"Hey, I was an EVA pilot for all for four SECONDS! I've never used an AT field before."

The Legionnaire hammered away at Touji, and he gave ground before it, backing behind Asuka. Kensuke stepped up to Asuka's left, trying to get into a good position to strike with Asuka at the thing.

The Legionnaire suddenly froze, and stared to its right.

'No!' it shouted in their minds.

"Whoa!" Kensuke said, as a series of orange hexagons flashed up between him and the Legionnaire's slapping tentacles.

"Kensuke?" Asuka asked.

"Yeah, I'm okay, just a little surprised. Now what?"

"Both of you help me. Focus all your concentration at a point right in front of the corrupted Cherubim Core," Asuka ordered. Both Cherubims leaned forward, on either side of her, and Asuka reached out with her hands, focusing all her will power onto them, and ripped through the heart of the Legionnaires AT field.

"STRIKE!" Asuka ordered, tearing the AT field wide open.

"NOOOOO!" the Corrupted Cherubim roared as Touji and Kensuke drove their Lances through the Core of the unit. There was a flash of light and a shockwave as a blast enveloped the EVA and Cherubim, and parts of the Golden Cherubim were blasted all over the tomb corridor.

Asuka lowered her arms, and looked down at the torso of the Cherubim. Using the Lance to flip it over she saw the Core of the Legionnaire, and the green growth coming out of it.

"You're finished," She said, as she drove the Lance into the second Core. There was a smaller explosion, and the room shook again.

Finally, there was silence.

"Great work you guys!" Misato shouted at them.

"How's Shinji?"

"We don't know yet. The medics are trying to stabilize him. You should get to the Medical Ward ASAP."

"We're on our way Misato," Kensuke said.

"Not you, Kensuke. You either Touji. Dr. Akagi wants to see both of you in her lab as soon as you're out of your Cherubs."

Kensuke watched Asuka go up the tunnel ahead of the Cherubim team and turned to look at Touji. He remembered Touji had once called Dr. Akagi 'Doctor Poke-and-prod-me.'

"Touji, I think we're about to confirm that nickname you gave the good doctor several years ago."

Touji shuddered, nodded, and grabbed the lift wire that would take them up to the Cherubim Hangar.

##

Next: on Episode 3:08 of Neon Genesis Evangelion

With some of the Cherubim now having AT fields, things should be looking up for the NERV members of Nagoya-2. Instead, Shinji Ikari's continued coma is cause for concern. And what of Keele, and the elder Ikari? What vile plans have these two concocted, what and how will it effect the lives of the last Evanagelion Pilot's. When Shinji finally awakens from his coma, will he be in time?

It's Evangelion Episode 3:08 The Return.

Disclaimer: Neon Genesis Evangelion is Owned by Gainax. Buy the DVD's of the Series and the Movies from them. I did, and it was worth every dime. I don't own anything except my DVD's, and this is done for my own satisfaction.

Welcome to Season Three of Neon Genesis Evangelion: The Last Best Hope. The events chronicled here take place after the 1st season of the TV series, and the End of Evangelion Movie, as well as the events that took place in Neon Genesis Evangelion: The Awakening. The 24 part second season fic.

Episode 3:08 The Return

Presumed date is December 24th, 2019

##

Christmas eve in Japan arrived unheralded by the fanfare that it usually enjoyed. Despite being a non-christian country, Japan still celebrated the Holiday much as the rest of the world had, if only for the intrinsic consumerism that accompanied it. Since Third Impact, however, Christmas celebrations, though hardly commercial affairs anymore, had actually increased, as people gathered with their friends to celebrate the second chance at life the human race had been given.

Tonight, however, a somber mood was gripping the country. With the sum total of the countries population confined to one rather moderate sized city, its environs, and a former military base turned Humanities Defense Headquarters, the populace was very close knit. One could go the entire day in such a place and not meet someone they did not know. Everyone knew everyone else.

And everyone knew Shinji Ikari and Asuka Langley Soryu.

The news that Shinji Ikari had been injured holding off a Legionnaire at the Heart of the NERV facility hadn't been publicly released until the day after the incident, but everyone already knew what had happened. Everyone had a friend who was a member of the NERV staff, or a member of the Medical Team, or even a Cherubim Pilot or a member of their support staff. And thus it was that the story of Shinji Ikari's brief battle and defeat at the hand of the Legionnaire had leaked to the far corners of the city within an hour of his arrival at the NERV Trauma Center.

Asuka Langley Soryu, famed pilot of the former Unit 02, and now the only other remaining Evangelion, had arrived there shortly after the end of the battle, rushed there by an anxious Misato and Ryouji Kagi, the Commander and Sub-Commander of the NERV base, and the de-facto leaders of Japan.

The trio had waited anxiously as the doctors had worked feverishly for hours to try and patch up the damage done to Shinji's body by the Legionnaire. The miraculous healing effects that Shinji had displayed for years now failed to appear, and Asuka and the others began to fear that Shinji might have expended too much of his AT field energy holding the Legionnaire at bay in the brief fight. At last, the doctors had finished doing what little they could, and Shinji had been brought into the hospitals ICU to recover.

That had been nearly two weeks ago.

His battered and shattered body seemed to be healing at a slower rate than even the doctors could explain, and Shinji remained in a deep Coma. Asuka, refusing to leave his side, lay curled against him in the pre-dawn morning. Nurses in their stations, less than twenty feet away, monitored a bank of screens displaying the status of this most important patient. Misato Kagi, current commander of NERV, sat deep within the bowels of the Nagoya-2 base, asleep in her office, watching duplicate screens of Shinji's vitals, and her husband Ryouji lay on a couch across from her, softly snoring.

And deep within a hidden facility in Hong Kong, two figures watched screens showing all of these people and more.

##

Across the Sea of Japan at the NERV base being run by Gendo Ikari and Chairman Keele, a strange figure emerged from a tunnel deep within the facility, and walked slowly yet inexorably to the lifts. Entering the lift it passed its hand over the control panel, and the lift began to rise. When the lift stopped, its doors opened onto a vast chamber that would have been familiar to Shinji, Asuka, or any of the senior NERV personnel in Japan. Here was a control room, almost a mirror image of the destroyed control room from the Geofront deep below Tokyo-3.

Several personnel were here at the controls, as well as several other creatures who resembled the newcomer. Their skinny bodies belied their considerable strength, and their yellow skin resembled the jaundiced appearance of someone suffering advanced liver failure. Their perverted expressions and pointed ears and teeth, hinted at their other-worldly origin. The creature ignored the other here, though, and proceeded up the stairs to the command station. Here sat two powerful figures.

Gendo Ikari sat behind Keele on his right, much as Fuyutsuki had once done for him. He watched as the creature slouched forward, and address Keele.

"My master wishes to know how your search is coming."

"He knows very well how it is going. Why are you really here?" Keele asked.

The creature grinned, an evil slash that split its face and revealed its sharp pointed teeth.

"My master wishes you to launch the device, to finish a task one of his messengers was unable to complete."

"The Mech is not ready. We lack a power source strong enough to compete against the Evangelions or those Bastard Cherubim they've created," Keele said. "And we have no way to counter the AT fields of the Evangelions. Without that the machine is useless."

"We will provide you with a suitable power source. Will you launch it?"

"Yes, we'll launch it. When do we get the power source?"

"Now. Look," the courier said, motioning to the main screens.

The Screens shifted to show a launch facility identical to the old NERV launch bay in Tokyo-3. Standing in the launch bay was no Evangelion though. Instead a Jet Alone Android stood there.

There was a slight harmonic tremor, and a gigantic snake like creature rose up before the Jet Alone, and slithered around the Mech's waist. A light began to emanate from the creature, and, with a flash, the snake like thing vanished and a glowing black core lay exposed at the heart of the Jet Alone's chest, dark tendrils leaching into the gigantic metal body.

The Jet Alone's mono-eye glowed with eldritch power.

"Now, you are ready."

"Very well. Launch the Jet Alone," Keele said.

Gendo reached to his side, and pressed a master control switch, and the Jet Alone's restraints were released, and the Mech rocketed to the surface.

"Finish this task. Recover the items my Master requires, and you will achieve that which you most desire," the messenger said, as it turned to walk away.

Behind Keele, Gendo stood up, watching the thing go, and then turned to gaze down at Keele.

A scowl crossed his face as he looked from the back of Keele's head to the screen where the Jet Alone was running away from the base at tremendous speed.

Gendo Ikari watched the bastardized creation running southeast, vanishing into the sea after only a few minutes. Gendo's gaze returned to the back of Keele's head, and a look of pure hatred crossed his face.

'You waste the chance you've been given, and it is going to cost us everything,' he thought silently.

##

Shinji found himself dressed in his customary duty uniform and seated upon a familiar bench of a moving train. Sitting up, Shinji glanced around at the all too familiar surroundings and sighed.

"Something has gone wrong, I take it?" He asked the air.

"I greet you once again, Shinji Ikari," came a voice from the ether.

Before Shinji, three figures materialized slowly. Kaworu, Shinji, and Asuka sat before him.

"I thought you were forbidden to interfere," Shinji said, looking at the not-Kaworu.

"Under normal circumstances, yes, but something has happened."

Shinji waited for it.

"Your father has returned from the sea of LCL, and he is not alone, Keele is with him," not-Shinji said.

Shinji lowered his head. Part of him had hoped his father would return, knew he would, but if he was with Keele, it could not bode well.

"Keele has been contacted by the servants of the Morning Star. It is because of this that we were able to contact you," not-Asuka said.

"What are they planning," Shinji asked.

"We are not allowed to tell you. But you can likely guess," not-Kaworu said.

"They're coming for us. They want to re-initiate Third Impact, don't they?" Shinji said.

The three warrior angels looked at one another, then back to Shinji, and nodded slightly.

"Does my father realize who, what the Legionnaires are?"

"He does," not-Asuka said.

Shinji shook his head sadly.

"We can give you some small bit of guidance, perhaps," not-Asuka said.

"Yes?" Shinji asked, raising his head to look at them.

"You must discover that which has been lost to antiquity. Legends handed down from the past are not just stories. Some contain facts, and clues to weapons of terrible power. The Morning Star has been too distracted as yet to begin searching for them, but he will. Now that you have all the Lances, he will need something that he can hope to defeat you with. Something to tip the scales in his favor. If this existence is to survive, it must be you that recovers those weapons. You who finds humanities last salvation," the three explained, alternating speakers with each sentence.

Then, as one, the three began to dissolve again.

"Wait, what's that supposed to mean, which legends do you mean?" Shinji asked.

"You will know where to look for your answers, all you need do is think upon it," not-Asuka said.

Shinji watched his counterpart smile at him, then the ghostly image turned to look at not-Kaworu questioningly. Not-Kaworu smiled and nodded, and not-Shinji looked back.

"One last thing. The Awakenings are going to continue, indeed this will continue for decades to come, as the tides ebb and flow, so shall the souls returning from the gulf. Even now another wave of humanity is preparing to wash up on the shores of the LCL Sea. Very soon now, one will arrive whom you have sorely missed. It will be up to you to protect this person, for they are a part of you. More-so than you ever imagined," the angel said with a smile.

"What do you mean?" Shinji asked. "Who is it?"

"You will know when you see them. If you have any questions as to the truth of their existence, ask Doctor Akagi. She knows the hidden truth of it," not-Shinji said, smiling as he vanished into the ether.

"Now what?" Shinji asked the empty train car.

"Now you wake up," came the echo of not-Kaworu's voice.

##

Shinji sat bolt upright in the hospital bed, and tore the oxygen mask from his face, gaging as the tube that had been down his throat withdrew.

"Uuuh," was all he managed to gasp, his throat raw and sore from having the foreign object that had been irritating it for so long so roughly removed.

Shinji tried to flex his sore muscles, but found himself weak, and having to struggle to accomplish the smallest tasks. He tried willing his AT field to heal him, but he could feel its weak response to his commands.

'That doesn't look good,' he thought to himself, unable to vocalize the words through his sore throat and battered vocal chords.

His energy depleted, he fell back into his bed, and listened to the monitors next to him beep, and buzz, and wondered why no one had yet come to check on the siren that was sounding.

Then he realized the siren wasn't the type that would be used in a hospital to alert the staff, but rather a long and wailing siren he was only too familiar with.

It was the Base's Alert Siren. The one that sounded when a Legionnaire attacked.

Trying to orient himself, he looked out the window at his bedside, and saw, he presumed, a clear view to the northeast, and the mountains overlooking the city and the base.

Something was coming down the hillside in the distance, and the bodies of the giant Cherubim were scattered all about it, and in its wake. Only Asuka's Evangelion was still standing, trying to hold the thing back, her AT field flaring around her as she gripped the things shoulders. But, like him, all those years ago, Asuka couldn't hold the Jet Alone back. Indeed, it looked like the Jet Alone was even fighting back, pummeling Asuka's Evangelion with blow after terrible blow.

Shinji watched as Asuka's AT field flared with each hit, and then, one time, it didn't.

Armored exoskeleton shattered under the fierce blow, and Asuka screamed in pain. The Jet alone grabbed her and tossed her aside, ripping the Lance of Longinus from her grip as it did so.

Shinji knew what was happening now.

It was coming for him.

From outside his room, he could hear the staff screaming and rushing around, trying to get other patients out, or panicking, and trying to save themselves. Summoning all his strength, he pushed himself out of the bed, and hit the ground hard. Crawling on his belly, pulling himself with his arms, he made it to the hallway, where he found an unused wheelchair. He pulled himself up into it, and eased off the brakes, pushing himself in the direction, he hoped, of the elevators. Luck was with him, and within moments he found a bank of lifts, one with a red glowing symbol of NERV above the door. He pressed the call button for that one, and the doors opened immediately.

Moments later Shinji was inside, and the doors were closing. He thought he'd made it smoothly, but just before the doors closed, a giant metallic hand crashed through the hall in front of him, and the hospital vanished in a cloud of dust and smoke, as the doors sealed shut.

The lift trembled, but began its long decent into the earth, and Shinji pushed the button, the only button on the control panel, in a desperate attempt to make the lift move faster. There was a moment of relief, followed by many more moments of terror, when Shinji felt the elevator suddenly accelerate, and then begin to free fall.

The Jet Alone had severed the elevators cables.

Shinji dropped with ever increasing speed into the depths, and he began to wonder if anything would stop his fall, other than the elevator shafts floor, when he felt a jerk, and gravity returned. The screeching of the elevators emergency brakes filled the cabin, and Shinji felt the elevator slow, and finally stop.

"Ding!" the door chime sounded, and the door started to open, only to stutter to a stop, as the power failed. The gap in the door was less than a foot, but Shinji, who had fallen from the chair in the wild decent, was able to pull himself through it by twisting sideways.

Shinji felt a tremendous shudder rock the floor beneath him, and tried to pull himself to a standing position, using the wall next to the elevator. A passing technician saw him, and rushed over to help him.

"Captain Ikari, sir, I didn't know you were awake yet, please, let me get you a wheelchair."

"No," Shinji said, "Get me to my Evangelion."

"But, Sir..."

"NOW!" Shinji shouted with all his strength.

The young man ducked under one of Shinji's arms and took most of the weight off his too weak legs. Together, they struggled down the hall to another lift, as the building continued to shudder around them.

"How long has the attack been going on?"

"Almost two hours. The Cherubim all launched with the Evangelion when the detection satellites picked the thing coming up out of the Sea of Japan."

"Two hours?" Shinji marveled. Rarely had his fights lasted more than a few minutes, and with the added power of the entire Cherubim force behind her, Asuka had still not managed to defeat the Jet Alone? Something was wrong. Terribly wrong.

The lift doors opened on the hangar room, and Shinji saw his Evangelion, its familiar purple armor gleaming under the lights. The intern brought Shinji to the spot beneath the Evangelion that was closest to the core, and retreated.

"Are you going to be okay, sir?" the young man asked.

"Yes. I think we're all going to be okay," Shinji replied, trying to will his AT field to reach out and touch the core.

Nothing happened, except the floor rocked as if an explosion had gone off not far away.

Shinji looked back to the Intern, to try and reassure the man. Instead the horrified look on the mans face made Shinji turn to see what he knew he would see.

The Jet Alone was emerging from a pile of rubble and debris that had been one of the launch tubes, and holding the true Lance of Longinus. The lance twisted, and extended into its Javelin form, and Shinji heard a horrible voice echo in his head.

'Die Ikari, and bother my master no more!'

The Jet Alone struck then, and the last thing Shinji saw was the glowing core sitting high on the things chest.

'What the?' Shinji thought, as his eyes fluttered open.

The room was still there, but his perspective had changed. It took him a few moments to realize what had happened. Unit 01 had fallen on him, and his direct contact with the Evangelion had initiated the transfer.

Shinji stood, and faced the Jet Alone, looking down at his gigantic fists, and flexing them experimentally.

"You are so dead," he said, turning on the human creation.

'How?' the thing blasted into Shinji's mind.

Shinji had no answers for the Jet Alone / Legionnaire hybrid, no answers but his huge armored fists. He pounded into the thing, grasping the Lance of Longinus in an attempt to wrench it from the creatures grasp. He wished that he had one of the other weapons that the Angels had told him about.

'The Lance is mine, Ikari, and soon, the other weapons shall fall into my master's hands.'

Shinji pulled back, slightly, shocked that the thing could penetrate his mind so easily, and read his thoughts.

'Yes, Ikari, do you see it now? Your defenses are weak. You have fought long, and hard, but it has all been for naught. You will fall, and with you, the last hope of humanity.'

Shinji gritted his teeth and growled through them, pulling against the Lance. The things grip was firm, however, and he had no chance of pulling the Lance free as things now stood.

"Shinji, get that thing out of the base!" came Misato's shout over the comm.

Remembering his fight years before within the bowls of another NERV facility, he threw the thing into the launch bay, covering its body with his own.

"Launch Now Misato!"

Gravity clawed at his armored body as he was hurled upwards out of the base with the Jet Alone. Thrown clear of the launcher, the two armored titans crashed to the ground, both of them still clutching at the Lance. Shinji felt a strange tingling in front of him and watched as the mono-eye of the great machine flared, and a beam of terrible light struck out.

Shinji Screamed as the beam struck his left shoulder, carving out parts of the exoskeleton and severing the left shoulder fin at the base. The Evangelion's blood poured from the wound, but Shinji didn't have time to pay it any heed. The tingling was starting again.

Shinji tried to wrench the Lance from the Jet Alone with a tremendous effort, but only succeeded in losing his own grip and falling backwards, crashing into an apartment complex. Steadying himself, he watched as the beam sliced out again, dodging to the left, and taking a minor hit on his right thigh. He though himself lucky until he felt the Lance entering his back.

The Jet Alone has used the beam to drive Shinji into striking range with the Lance.

"Shinji," he heard her weak voice over the comm.

"I'm, uhn, okay Asuka," he answered.

"This thing is tough Shinji, glad you could join us," Asuka said.

"What would you guys do without me?" Shinji said, rising up to his knees.

Shinji groaned as the Jet alone drove the Lance in deeper.

Shinji rolled suddenly towards the Jet Alone, and the Lance was ripped from the things hands. Shinji pulled the lance from his back, and turned to face the Jet Alone. A giant armored fist slammed into his face, cracking the exoskeleton over his jaw.

'Where's my AT field?'

'What's wrong Ikari? Too weak? Would you like me to give you a break?'

Armored hands lashed out and grasped Shinji's left arm. There was a violent wrenching, and Shinji felt his left arm break, even as he was lifted from his feet. He crashed into the ground, shattering the hill top park where he and Asuka had spent so many happy days and nights.

"Hang on Shinji, we're coming," Asuka said to him.

'She sounds so weak, doesn't she Ikari? Your friends are defeated, and your mate ... ah your mate. When I'm through with you, I'm going to go back to toying with her. Shall I destroy her mind before I destroy her body? I can do that. What do you think?'

Shinji heard the most wonderful music echoing thru his being as the beam from the Jet Alone struck him again. This time it was spread out, diffused, not a slicing weapon, but an intruding spotlight, flashing into his consciousness. He'd heard this before, but now

the music had a discordant tone, as if it was a corrupted version of the song.

"NO!" Shinji cried, and the earth around the city trembled as Shinji's AT field returned, flattening the forest around him, blasting down nearby buildings, and tossing the Jet Alone from its feet.

##

Misato and the rest of the Nerv staff covered their eyes as the screens flared opaque and filled the room with light.

Only Maya, her hand shielding her eyes, continued to call out battle updates.

"Shinji's AT field just buried all the needles. His energy emission readings are at least thirty times the levels we've previously recorded."

"Dear God." Misato gasped.

"Shinji, No, Pull It In!" Ritsuko cried into the comms.

"What is it Ritsuko?" Misato asked, noting the near hysterical tone in the Doctors voice.

"We don't know the full limits of Shinji and Asuka's AT field strength, but energy emissions at that level would have severe consequences for even them. And in Shinji's condition there's no way he can sustain it."

##

Asuka was getting to her feet, blasted, battered, and bruised, her right arm hanging limply from its socket. Touji, Kensuke and the others were slowly helping each other up when the blastwave from Shinji's AT field hit them. Asuka looked up, and watched as dozens of wings erupted out of Shinji's body. Wings from his head, wings off his shoulders, hips, wrists and ankles. The light was blinding and the force of the energy from Shinji's AT field knocked them all back off their feet.

Asuka gazed at Shinji in fascination, amazement and horror.

Shinji lifted his arms up, and leapt into the air. In an instant he was a speck in the sky, glowing like a second sun, only brighter.

"I AM TIRED OF YOU BASTARDS SHOWING UP AND THREATENING MY FRIENDS AND FAMILY!" Shinji shouted. "I'M TIRED OF YOU PLAYING WITH OUR LIVES! I'M TIRED OF YOU POKING AND PRODDING OUR MINDS! I'M TIRED OF THE MANIPULATION, THE GAMES AND THE BEATINGS!"

The Jet Alone tipped back, and laughed, its mono eye beam firing skyward. The beam struck one of Shinji's wings, and sliced it clean off. The wing immediately regenerated.

The Jet Alone roared, and blasted energy into the sky. Every time the beam hit Shinji, the damage inflicted was immediately healed.

"YOU WILL NEVER HURT ANYONE AGAIN!" the force of Shinji's scream shook the sky and the ground below him.

Shinji dove, his AT field flaring even more, and he accelerated toward the ground. Beams from the Jet Alone seemed to slice through him, but as fast as they hit, they were healed. At forty thousand feet, Shinji broke the sound barrier. He continued pouring the power on, and thrust the Lance of Longinus out before him, targeting the Jet Alone's dark core. At twenty thousand feet the shockwave of his passing blasted the low thin clouds, dissipating them for miles around.

The Cherubim were on their feet now, and Asuka, in her Evangelion, was there with them, miles from the Jet Alone and the

plummeting Shinji Ikari, on the mountainside overlooking Nagoya-2.

Suddenly, at the peak of Shinji's flaring energy release, an instant before he struck the Jet Alone with the Lance of Longinus leading the way, a dark shadow, as dark as Shinji's light, seemed to flare from the ground. The Jet Alone tipped backwards, impossibly fast, and its mono eye beam fired. Shinji's AT field flared, and the layers separated. As Shinji thrust the Lance of Longinus into the dark heart of the Jet Alone, the Jet Alone's thin, long arms, thrust upward, and Shinji was impaled.

Shinji hit the ground with the force of a comet, and the resultant shockwave blasted buildings a mile away, and shook the Cherubim where they stood.

'I win, Ikari, I'll see you at my master's side shortly,' the Jet Alone's psychic voice whispered softly, as the dark light from the shattered core faded into nothingness.

Asuka struggled to reach Shinji's slowly moving form, and it was long seconds later that she finally reached him.

"Shinji?" Asuka said, watching as the wings sprouting from Shinji were slowly fading, and falling off of him.

"Asuka..." Shinji gasped.

"Come on Shinji, get up," she said, trying to help him to his feet.

"I wish..." he gasped again, "I could..."

Asuka looked at him, trying to figure out what he was saying. Then she saw it. The Jet Alone's arm was protruding from Shinji's back.

"Its going to be okay Shinji, we'll pull that thing out of you, and get you healed up," she said, preparing to lift him off the arm.

"Asuka... don't..."

Touji was behind Asuka, holding her shoulder, and Kensuke was on the other side, trying to support her.

"Guys, help me out, we've got to get Shinji inside the base, so Doctor Akagi can look at him."

"Touji... Kensuke... take care of her. She'll... need... you..." Shinji gasped out.

"We will Shinji, we will," Kensuke gasped.

Asuka struggled to free herself from the two friends grip, and to go to Shinji's aid.

"I... I... love you... Asuka... I'll be... waiting... for... you" Shinji gasped out, agonizingly slowly, and rolled off the Jet Alone.

Asuka saw it then, and the camera's in her head's exoskeleton broadcast the image back to the base beneath them.

Shinji's Core was shattered. Both of the Jet Alone's arms had pierced the red globe, destroying the home of Shinji's soul.

Asuka wrenched herself from Kensuke and Touji's grip, ignoring the dislocated arm.

"SHINJI! SHINJI! NO! NO! DON'T LEAVE ME! YOU PROMISED ME WE'D BE TOGETHER FOREVER! WHAT ABOUT THAT PROMISE? WHAT ABOUT OUR LIVES TOGETHER?"

Asuka ripped Shinji's Evangelion body off of the Jet alone and cradled it in her arms.

"You can't leave me Shinji, you can't, what will I do without you? What will we do without you? You can't leave us. You'll never get to see them if you leave now, I didn't even get a chance to tell you. I was saving it to surprise you, so you can't die. You have to be here for us, for me."

A small light flared at the heart of the shattered core, a feeble flicker glowed in Shinji's eyes.

'us...' Shinji's mental voice caressed Asuka's mind questioningly.

"I'm pregnant Shinji. We're going to have a baby. You're going to be a father," Asuka cried.

'father...' the voice whispered, and Asuka felt the joy and sadness that mixed with that single word, as Shinji's touch faded, and the light at the heart of the core faded, blinked, and was gone.

The cries of Asuka's Evangelion shook the skies of Nagoya-2, carrying the anguish and the agony of the entire city to the heavens. And deep within the base, in protected bunkers, in halls, in rooms, and in the command center, the cries were accompanied by silent prayers, asking god to welcome a their beloved son into his arms.

For a soldier, had found peace

##.

Next: on Episode 3:09 of Neon Genesis Evangelion

Shinji Ikari is gone. His death made even more bittersweet by Asuka's public admission of her pregnancy. How will all the players of this game react, now that the most valuable piece has been removed from the board? And what of the message Shinji was given by his guardian angels? Are there any answers, or merely more questions in the next chapter of Evangelion: Last Best Hope

It's Evangelion Episode 3:09 Shores of Change

Welcome to my third season of Neon Genesis Evangelion.

All standard "Its not mine, don't sue" disclaimers apply.

Evangelion Episode 3:09 Shores of Change

Or at least, that's what this should be

See, over the last several years, demands on my personal time have grown and grown, and my time to write has shrunk and shrunk.

I had originally planned out another 16 episodes and a 17th EPILOGUE for this series, but, at the rate I've been writing, that might take me another 7-10 years.

So instead of making my fans languish (and me beating myself up for not being creative on a better timetable) I'm going to finish the series.

No, I'm not abandoning it, like many authors do with their works, but I am going to finish it in a blaze of glory.

So, its here that I'm announcing the concluding story of Neon Genesis Evangelion: Last Best Hope.

NEON GENESIS EVANGELION: LAST BEST HOPE: RESSURECTION: THE OVA

As of the time of this writing, I am beginning the climax of the story, and the culmination of almost six years of work. The current work is over 45 pages long, and some 15000 words.

I should have this finished and back from my pre-readers in a couple days, as they've been working hand in hand with me as I write this, to save time. (and because they're as impatient as any of my fans are to see how I get myself out of the corner I wrote myself into)

So, thank you all for the support you've given me over the years, and I hope you enjoyed reading this, as much as I enjoyed writing it.

Drop by Evamade DOT Net sometime, and say "hi" I'm around there a lot these days, as I run the place.

(ps, any fanfic authors out there looking for a home, are more than welcome to drop by, we're always looking for new stories to add to the fanfiction section, and we're an open site, so there's no judges to approve or deny your work)